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King, Z. J. (2017). *The Delay of the Parousia and Gentile Inclusion in the Synoptic Parables*. [PhD-Thesis - Research and graduation internal, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam].

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The Delay of the *Parousia* and Gentile Inclusion in the Synoptic Parables

ACADEMISCH PROEFSCHRIFT

ter verkrijging van de graad Doctor aan
de Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam,
op gezag van de rector magnificus
prof.dr. V. Subramaniam,
in het openbaar te verdedigen
ten overstaan van de promotiecommissie
van de Faculteit der Godgeleerdheid
op dinsdag 14 februari 2017 om 13.45 uur
in de aula van de universiteit,
De Boelelaan 1105

door

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geboren te Ohio, Verenigde Staten

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Summary of the Argument of This Study (Abstract)

Modern biblical scholarship generally supposes that Jesus and the early church expected an imminent *Parousia* (e.g., Matt 10:23; Mark 9:1//Matt 16:28//Luke 9:27; Mark 13:30//Matt 24:34//Luke 21:32; Mark 14:62//Matt 26:64; 1 Cor 7:29-31; Rom 13:11-12; and 1 Thess 5:1-3). Though not entirely unforeseen, the passage of time after Easter challenged early Christian hopes for an imminent *Parousia* and required the contemplation of a delay (e.g., Matt 25:5; Matt 25:19//Luke 19:12, Luke 18:7; Luke 17:22; and 2 Pet 3:9). The early Christian tradition adapted several literary motifs to give the delay parenetic significance. However, three of these literary motifs, the images of growth, the absent master, and the wedding feast became especially relevant to the early Christian tradition as it came to grips with the challenges of the *Parousia's* delay, the rejection of Jesus' message by the Jewish leadership, and the relatively ambivalent view of contemporary Judaism to Gentile inclusion. For those disappointed by the Jewish rejection of Jesus and the ongoing passage of time after the Resurrection, the *Parousia's* delay provided an impetus to seek the inclusion of Gentiles (Mark 13:10//Matt 24:14//Luke 21:24; Matt 28:16-20; Acts 1:8; 13:46; 2 Pet 3:9; and Rom 11:25-27) into the Christian community. The early Christian tradition employed the literary motifs of growth (as found in the parables of the Mustard Seed [Mark 4:30-34//Luke 13:18-19//Matt 13:31-32//*Gos. Thom.* 20], and the Weeds [Matt 13:24-30, 36-43//*Gos. Thom.* 57]), the wedding feast (as found in the parable Wedding Banquet/Feast [Matt 22:1-14//Luke 14:15-23//*Gos. Thom.* 64]), and the absent master (as found in the parable of the Talents/Minas [Matt 25:14-30//Luke 19:11-27]) to express the delay of the *Parousia* as an opportunity for Gentile inclusion into the Christian community.

This study is dedicated to my wife, Sharon, who encouraged me to finish this particular race despite the many challenges of writing, working, and living in Haiti.

I also dedicate this study to my four children, Hannah, Vivian, Isaiah, and Esther, in the hope that they will learn to appreciate these texts as much as I have.

Finalman, mwen dedike etid sa a pou etidyan teyolojik ayisyen mwen yo. Mwen espere yo ka avanse teyoloji bibliik pi lwen nan peyi ak legliz pa yo.

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Abbreviations for Primary Sources

Biblical

Old Testament (OT)

Gen	Genesis	Song	Song of Songs (of Solomon)
Exod	Exodus	Isa	Isaiah
Lev	Leviticus	Jer	Jeremiah
Num	Numbers	Lam	Lamentations
Deut	Deuteronomy	Ezek	Ezekiel
Josh	Joshua	Dan	Daniel
Judg	Judges	Hos	Hosea
1-2 Sam	1-2 Samuel	Obad	Obadiah
1-2 Kgs	1-2 Kings	Mic	Micah
1-2 Chr	1-2 Chronicles	Nah	Nahum
Neh	Nehemiah	Hab	Habakkuk
Esth	Esther	Zeph	Zephaniah
Ps	Psalms	Hag	Haggai
Prov	Proverbs	Zech	Zechariah
Eccl	Ecclesiastes/Qoheleth	Mal	Malachi

Apocrypha

Bar	Baruch	Sir	Sirach
1-2 Macc	1-2 Maccabees	Tob	Tobit
Jdt	Judith	Wis	Wisdom of Solomon

New Testament (NT)

Matt	Matthew	1-2 Thess	1-2 Thessalonians
Rom	Romans	1-2 Tim	1-2 Timothy
1-2 Cor	1-2 Corinthians	Heb	Hebrews
Gal	Galatians	Jas	James
Eph	Ephesians	1-2 Pet	1-2 Peter
Phil	Philemon	Rev	Revelation
Col	Colossians		

Editions and Versions

BHS	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i>	NASB	New American Standard Bible
ESV	English Standard Version	NIV	New International Version
NA ²⁷	<i>Novum Testamentum Graece</i> , Nestle-Aland, 27th ed.	NRSV	New Revised Standard Version

Pseudepigraphical, Apostolic, Rabbinic, and Other Ancient Sources

<i>'Abot R. Nat.</i>	<i>'Abot de Rabbi Nathan</i>	<i>Gos. Thom.</i>	<i>Gospel of Thomas</i>
<i>Ag. Ap.</i>	<i>Against Apion</i> , Flavius Josephus	<i>Hist.</i>	<i>History</i> , Tacitus
<i>Ant.</i>	<i>Jewish Antiquities</i> , Flavius Josephus	<i>Hist. eccl.</i>	<i>Ecclesiastical History</i> , Eusebius
<i>Apocr. Ezek.</i>	<i>Apocryphon of Ezekiel</i>		Pamphili
<i>2 Bar.</i>	<i>2 Baruch (Syriac Apocalypse)</i>	<i>J.W.</i>	<i>Jewish War</i> , Flavius Josephus
<i>1-2 Clem</i>	<i>1-2 Clement</i>	<i>Jos. Asen.</i>	<i>Joseph and Aseneth</i>
<i>Comm. Luke</i>	<i>Commentary on Luke</i> , Cyril of Alexandria	<i>Moses</i>	<i>The Life of Moses</i> , Philo of Alexandria
<i>Comm. Matt.</i>	<i>Commentary on Matthew</i> , Origen	<i>Mart. Ascen.</i>	<i>Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah</i>
<i>Dial.</i>	<i>Dialogue with Trypho the Jew</i> , Justin Martyr	<i>Isa.</i>	
		<i>Nat.</i>	<i>Natural History</i> , Pliny the Elder
		<i>Pan.</i>	<i>Panarion</i> , Epiphanius

<i>Did.</i>	<i>Didache</i>	<i>Pss. Sol.</i>	<i>Psalms of Solomon</i>
<i>Embassy</i>	<i>Embassy to Gaius, Philo of Alexandria</i>	<i>Sib. Or.</i>	<i>Sibylline Oracles</i>
<i>1 En.</i>	<i>1 Enoch (Ethiopic Apocalypse)</i>	<i>T. Jud.</i>	<i>Testament of Judah</i>
<i>2 En.</i>	<i>2 Enoch (Slavonic Apocalypse)</i>	<i>T. Levi</i>	<i>Testament of Levi</i>
<i>Exp. Luc.</i>	<i>Exposition on the Gospel of Luke,</i> <i>Ambrose of Milan</i>	<i>T. Naph.</i>	<i>Testament of Naphtali</i>
<i>Gos. Eb.</i>	<i>Gospel of the Ebionites</i>	<i>T. Sim.</i>	<i>Testament of Simeon</i>
<i>Gos. Heb.</i>	<i>Gospel of the Hebrews</i>	<i>Theoph.</i>	<i>Theophania, Eusebius</i>
<i>Gos. Naz.</i>	<i>Gospel of the Nazarenes</i>	<i>Tg. Ps.-J.</i>	<i>Targum pseudo Jonathan</i>

Abbreviations for Secondary Sources

AB	The Anchor Bible	JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplemental Series
ABRL	The Anchor Bible Reference Library	JSS	<i>The Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
ATI	<i>American Theological Inquiry</i>	JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
AnBib	<i>Analecta Biblica</i>	LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies
AThRSupp	Anglican Theological Review Supplementary Series	LUÅ	Lunds Universitets Årsskrift
ANF	<i>Ante-Nicene Fathers</i>	MSJ	<i>Master's Seminary Journal</i>
ANTC	Abingdon New Testament Commentaries	NCBC	The New Century Bible Commentary
BAGD	<i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, 1979</i>	NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
BAR	<i>Biblical Archeology Review</i>	NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
BBR	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>	NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
BDB	<i>Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon, 1996</i>	NovT	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament	NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
Bib	<i>Biblica</i>	OTP	<i>The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments, ed. Charlesworth</i>
BSac	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>	Proof	<i>Proof texts, A Journal of Jewish Literary History</i>
BTB	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>	PRSt	<i>Perspectives in Religious Studies</i>
BZ	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>	ResQ	<i>Restoration Quarterly</i>
CBQ	<i>The Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>	RevExp	<i>Review and Expositor</i>
CBQMS	The Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series	RTP	<i>Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie</i>
CBR	<i>Currents in Biblical Research</i>	SAC	Studies in Antiquity and Christianity
ConJ	<i>The Concordia Journal</i>	SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
CTJ	<i>The Calvin Theological Journal</i>	SBT	Studies in Biblical Theology
DBL	<i>Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek New Testament</i>	SEÅ	<i>Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok</i>
EBD	<i>The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary</i>	SJLA	Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity
ETL	<i>Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses</i>	SJT	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
ExpTim	<i>Expository Times</i>	SP	Sacra Pagina Series
HBT	<i>Horizons in Biblical Theology</i>	ST	<i>Studia Theologica</i>
EBD	<i>The Eerdmans Bible Dictionary</i>	SVC	Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae
ETL	<i>Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses</i>	TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
ExpTim	<i>Expository Times</i>	ThTo	<i>Theology Today</i>
HBT	<i>Horizons in Biblical Theology</i>	TS	<i>Theological Studies</i>
HNTC	Harper's New Testament Commentaries	TTE	<i>The Theological Educator</i>
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>	TynBul	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
IBS	<i>Irish Biblical Studies</i>	USQR	<i>Union Seminary Quarterly Review</i>
ICC	The International Critical Commentary	VC	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
Int	<i>Interpretation</i>	WBC	Word Biblical Commentary

<i>JBL</i>	<i>The Journal of Biblical Literature</i>	<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
<i>JBPR</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical and Pneumatological Research</i>	<i>WUNT</i>	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>	<i>ZNW</i>	Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>		

Preface

This study grew out of my 2005 Master of Theology thesis entitled, *The Ethical Admonition of Watchfulness and the Timing of the Parousia*, supervised by Dr. Dean Deppe of Calvin Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Michigan (USA). As I studied γρηγορέω and ἀγρυπνέω, the key words in this type of eschatologically-orientated parenesis, I started to recognize a broad trend in the Gospel sayings and the Epistles in which the timing of the *Parousia* was somehow connected to the early Christian community's ministry among the Gentiles. Specifically, I observed that the early Christian authors viewed the delay of the *Parousia* as a *reason* or *motivation* to include Gentiles in the life and preaching of the predominantly Jewish movement. For the next seven years, this personal discovery, though by no means unknown to those familiar with NT eschatology or missiology, percolated in my mind as I taught theology students in Haiti (West Indies). From a purely historical perspective, the phenomenon of Gentile inclusion in the early Christian movement proved to be one of the main channels for what would later be recognized as Western Civilization. From a personal perspective, Gentile inclusion was the precursor to Christian mission, a movement in which I have myself been professionally involved in three countries since 2003.

When I was graciously allowed to begin a doctoral study under Dr. Bert Jan Lietaert Peerbolte of the *Vrije Universiteit* of Amsterdam in 2011, I immediately chose to study the delay of the *Parousia* as an impetus for Gentile inclusion. Early in my research, I noticed that there was already significant academic inquiry into the dominical sayings connecting the delay of the *Parousia* and Gentile inclusion like Mark 13:10; Matt 24:14; 28:18-20; and Acts 1:6-8. However, in the parables I discovered more untrammelled ground for the kind of integrative study that would demonstrate a connection between the *Parousia's* delay and Gentile inclusion

in the early Christian communities. In particular, the literary motifs of *growth*, *wedding feast*, and *absent master*, which are present in the parables attributed to Jesus, seemed ideal choices to guide my research. But, in order for me to build my argument, I needed to develop a coherent set of terms and methodologies that I could employ both in my analysis of the literary motifs themselves and in the theological and socio-political realities lying behind them. In this preface, I will briefly present and define several key terms and methodologies used in this study. Hopefully, by performing this task at the beginning we can avoid unnecessary and untimely digressions later.

I. Terminological Notes

A. The *Parousia* and the *Eschatological Crisis*

For the purposes of this study I will use both the terms *eschatological crisis* and *Parousia*. The term *Parousia*,¹ derived from the verb *παίρειμι*, is an important word used in ancient Greek writings to refer to the visitation (i.e., “presence”) of a person of significance (i.e., a royal figure) or a divine being (i.e., a god).² The OT concept of the Day of the Lord, a divine visitation resulting in the vindication (or judgment) of Israel, closely approximates this most basic meaning of the *Parousia*.³ Though it may not necessarily refer to a Messianic figure, the vision of Dan

¹ See Matt 24:3, 27, 37, 39; 1 Cor 15:23; 1 Thess 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; 2 Thess 2:8; Jas 5:7, 8; 2 Pet 1:16; 3:4, 12; and 1 John 2:28. Other uses of the term include 1 Cor 16:17; 2 Cor 7:6, 7; 10:10; Phlm 1:26; 2:12; and 2 Thess 2:9.

² Albrecht Oepke, “παρουσία, πάρειμι,” *TDNT* (10 vols; Translated by G. W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–1976), 5.858–859; trans. of *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1933–1973).

³ J. A. T. Robinson, *Jesus and His Coming* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1957), 39, notes, “Now this language will be found upon examination to give expression to two closely related and often inseparable ideas, both of which are integrally involved in the conception of the *Parousia*. These themes are the themes, on the one hand, of vindication—of victory out of defeat—and, on the other, of visitation—of a coming among men in power and judgment.”

7:13-14⁴ provided a compelling foundation upon which the NT authors could build the concept of *Parousia* as the definitive eschatological divine visitation.⁵ For this reason, we may also speak of the *Parousia* in the sense of the *eschatological crisis* culminating in the final divine visitation of YHWH for vindication and judgment (e.g., Matt 24, Mark 13, 1 Thess 4:14-5:11; 2 Thess 2; etc.).⁶ According to many modern scholars, neither Jesus nor his immediate successors ever contemplated the return of Christ.⁷ Instead, Jesus and his immediate successors anticipated an eschatological visitation or *eschatological crisis* instigated by Jesus' ministry.⁸ As I will discuss below, this study does not have as its objective to chart the development of concepts from Jesus to the early Christian community. Therefore, I will set aside the question of the historical development of the term *Parousia*.

What I can say, however, is at a certain point the term *Parousia* came to be associated in the early Christian movement with the belief that Jesus Christ himself would come again as YHWH's eschatological agent of judgement and vindication. The term appears in the early Christian literature *most commonly* as a reference to the final manifestation of Christ at the end of time (Matt 24:3; 1 Thess 2:19; 5:23; Jas 5:7-8; and 1 John 2:28).⁹ Following this most conventional usage, in my study the term *Parousia* will denote the final appearance of the victorious Christ for judgment and vindication of his people. On the other hand, *eschatological*

⁴ "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed." See also 1 En. 14:18-23.

⁵ T. Francis Glasson, *The Second Advent: the Origin of the NT Doctrine* (London: Epworth Press, 1945), 16

⁶ Robinson, *Jesus and His Coming*, 19.

⁷ Marcus Borg, *Conflict, Holiness, and Politics in the Teaching of Jesus* (London: T&T Clark, 1998), 237.

⁸ Robinson, *Jesus and His Coming*, 70.

⁹ *Parousia* can also be used in reference to the first manifestation of the Christ (e.g., 2 Tim 1:10; 2 Pet 1:16).

crisis will simply refer to the more generic concept of YHWH's visitation for eschatological judgment and vindication of his people.

B. The Delay of the Parousia

There are several issues to be addressed with regard to the use of the term “delay.” First of all, the term “delay” itself presupposes the development of an interpretation for the non-occurrence of the eschatological crisis. In this sense, perhaps a term like “unfulfilled expectation of the *Parousia*” might be more appropriate than “delay.” However, the term “delay” is significant because it is commonly used in NT scholarship *and* because it appears in the early Christian writings themselves (i.e., in the terms *χρονίζω* and *χρόνος*) as an explanation of the unfulfilled hope of the *Parousia*. Secondly, the term “delay” often refers to an *unforeseen* prolonging. However, as I will argue, the prolonged period after Easter was not totally unexpected, but it was *undesired* by an early Christian community hoping for a quick eschatological vindication. For the purposes of this study, I will use the term “*delay*” to refer to the non-occurrence of what the NT speaks of as the final *cataclysmic return of Christ* (i.e., the *Parousia* as I have defined it above) by the time hoped for by the early Christian movement. Thus, *the delay of the Parousia is the indefinite period of time between the events of Easter and the end of time.*

C. Gentile Inclusion and Gentile Mission

Third, this dissertation will utilize the term “Gentile inclusion” wherever possible instead of “Gentile mission.” While not wishing to offer any evaluation of these two terms, we must note that “Gentile mission” presupposes a well-developed theology to support a concept (i.e., “mission”) which would have been counter-intuitive to many first century Jews (see chapter

two).¹⁰ Furthermore, since the term “mission” is utilized in contemporary literature in a myriad of ways, it is difficult to employ it without continually explaining and circumscribing its meaning. For this reason, wherever possible, I will utilize the term “Gentile inclusion,” referring to the tendency of the early Christian movement to embrace non-Jewish peoples as recipients of its message and members of its communities.

D. *Early Christian Community and Early Church*

Fourth, we will use the term, “*early Christian community*” instead of “*early church*.” It is not the goal of this study to determine the chronological point at which early Christians ceased to identify with the synagogue and began to identify themselves with the church, the assembly of Christ-followers (the ἐκκλησία of Matt 18:17). In order to avoid this controversy, we will use the term “*early Christian community*” instead. By using the term “early Christian community,” I do not mean to suggest that there was only *one* early Christian community after Easter, i.e., the apostolic community in Jerusalem whose history Luke narrates in his second volume.¹¹ Luke-Acts only gives us one viewpoint on the beginning of the Christian community. Furthermore, Luke has compressed his account of Christian origins to fit into his “*beginning in Jerusalem . . . to the ends of the earth*” organizational framework (Luke 24:47; cf. Acts 1:8). In fact, there are subtle hints even in Luke-Acts that other “Messianic-Movements” related to Jesus and John the Baptist existed from the earliest time.¹² However, we know very little about the earliest Christian

¹⁰ L. J. Lietaert Peerbolte, *Paul the Missionary* (Lueven: Peeters, 2003), 133, writes, “The idea of a worldwide mission to proclaim Christ is found only in a relatively late stratum of the writings of the NT, its most explicit formulation being the closing section of Matthew.”

¹¹ James D. G. Dunn, *Christianity in the Making* (3 vols; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 2:134. Dunn argues that any number of early Christian communities could have existed after Easter. The one whose theology effectively “won the competition” represents the tradition that we have received through the early Christian writings.

¹² Dunn, *Christianity in the Making*, 2:137, points out two curious incidents which suggest the existence of other “Messianic-Movements” related to Jesus and John the Baptist: first, Mark 9:38-40//Luke 9:49-50 portrays

communities independent of Jerusalem.¹³ For these reasons, I will use the term “early Christian community” to speak collectively about the groups of Christians that coalesced around notable and influential Christian personalities in the decades following Easter and who have left behind a documentary history in the early Christian writings we possess.

Unfortunately, even the term “Christian” itself is not without controversy. The earliest Christian documents portray Jesus’ disciples simply as Jews who confess Jesus of Nazareth as Messiah. According to the book of Acts (11:26; cf. 26:8; 1 Pet 4:16) it was much later at Antioch where the disciples of Jesus were first called Christians (Χριστιανοί). Perhaps even Paul himself prefigured the creation of the term in 1 Cor 15:23 and Gal 5:24 when he called believers “those of Christ” (οἱ τοῦ Χριστοῦ).¹⁴ It is not clear whether Χριστιανοί in the first century was a term used for all those believing in Jesus as the Christ¹⁵ or rather if it referred to a subset of Christ-followers such as Gentiles who were socially-distinguishable from the Jewish majority in the early Christian movement.¹⁶ In order to overcome this difficulty, some recent scholars have adopted other terms such as “Jesus-followers,” “Jesus-movement,” etc. to speak of early Christians. While there is nothing wrong with this newer terminology, we will simply adopt the

someone who was not recognized by Jesus’ disciples driving out demons in his name; and second, in Acts 18:24-19:7, Luke recounts the existence of believers who knew only of John the Baptist’s baptism and not that of Jesus.

¹³ Dunn, *Christianity in the Making*, 2:135-136.

¹⁴ Philippa Townsend, “Who Were the First Christians?” in *Heresy and Identity in Late Antiquity* (Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 119; ed. Eduard Iricinschi and Holger Zellentin; Tübingen: Mohr Seibek, 2008), 215.

¹⁵ W. Grundmann, “χρίω, χριστός, κτλ.,” *TDNT* 9.537, writes, “Since such designations are usually based on names, it is possible that in Antioch Χριστός was taken to be a proper name outside the Christian community, probably the name of a god. A reason for coining the term Χριστιανοί is that the Christians in Antioch were now viewed as a separate society rather than as a section of the Jewish synagogue (on this cf. Ac. 11:19–26a); possibly they were regarded as a kind of mystery fellowship.”

¹⁶ Townsend, “Who Were the First Christians,” 219, writes, “The name ‘Christians’ is a title of the ‘Gentile Christians’ since an intra-Jewish movement would not have concerned pagans. Specifically, these were not pagans who converted to Judaism (as many Gentile Jesus-followers surely did) nor Gentiles with some interest in synagogue participation on an individual basis; such people would have been recognizable figures in the ancient world.”

older term “Christian” and “Christian movement,” in the basic sense of a “Christ-person” or “Christ-movement” made up of Jews, Gentiles, or both.

E. *First Century Judaism and First Century Jews*

Since the subject of this study is the delay of the *Parousia* as a reason for Gentile inclusion, we are obligated to enter the complex dispute swirling around the use of the terms “Judaism” and “Jew” in scholarly reflection on the first century. In one sense, defining these terms is relatively easy given the rigid distinction made between “us” and “them” by those who were genetically Israelite in the first century.¹⁷ However, a thorny problem lurks in this terminology. In a religious movement as broad and diverse as the Jewish faith in the first century, there is really no such thing as “First Century Judaism,” but rather, “first century Judaisms.”¹⁸ Shaye Cohen has noted that in fact the term “Jew” in Greek (Ἰουδαῖος) first meant “Judean” (i.e., a person originating from Judea in Palestine). Only later in the century preceding Christ did the term come to denote someone who practices the religious and cultural tenets of Judaism.¹⁹ For this reason, the earliest Christians were thoroughly Jewish and considered themselves to be genuine practitioners of Israel’s ancestral religion, the faith of Moses, David, and the Prophets.

Despite the diversity in meanings of the terms “Judaism” and “Jew” in the first century, we can make a few cautious affirmations that should allow us to use these terms. Nearly all forms of

¹⁷ Shaye J. D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness, Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 1, notes, “This dualistic view of the world is not only a product of European ghettos or a response to Christian anti-Judaism; it is well attested in Graeco-Roman antiquity. Rabbinic literature is filled with statements that contrast ‘Israel’ with ‘the nations.’”

¹⁸ James Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways between Christianity and Judaism and Their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (2nd ed.; London: SCM Press, 2006), 24, writes, “It is now widely recognized that there was no single, uniform type of Judaism in the first century of the common era, certainly for the period we have primarily in view prior to 70 C.E. The older working assumption that rabbinic Judaism was already normative in first century Palestine at the time of Jesus has to be abandoned. Jewish scholars of the period such as Jacob Neusner and Alan Segal are leading the way in speaking of Judaisms (plural). Another way to put the point is that Second Temple Judaism to a large extent, latterly at least, consisted of a range of different interest groups.”

¹⁹ Cohen, *The Beginnings*, 3, 69.

Judaism in the first century shared the belief in the divine election of Israel as a set-apart and chosen people who have received the *Torah* as a locus of faith and life and the Jerusalem Temple²⁰ as the locus of worship of the one true creator God, YHWH, who rules the entire earth.²¹ A working definition of the term “Jew” in the first century emerges from the above delimitation of “Judaism.” For the purposes of this study, a Jew in the first century is a set apart person, either by birth as an ethnic member of Israel or by right of conversion such as circumcision,²² who undertakes the obligations of *Torah* in both life and in worship of the one true creator God, YHWH.²³ Two observations may be made with regard to these definitions. First, Gentile Christians will remain Gentiles no matter how they worship and live unless they undertake the obligations of *Torah* including full conversion (circumcision). Second, Jewish Christians who continue to keep *Torah* remain Jews despite their belief in Jesus as the Christ. In this way, our definition accounts for the presence of and tension between both Christian Jews and Gentiles in the developing first century Christian community.²⁴ The presence of former Gentile pagans who had not fully taken on the burden of *Torah* was destabilizing for *Torah*-observant early Jewish-Christian communities.

²⁰ Of course, not every Jewish group actually worshiped *at the Temple*. The Essenes, for example, did not participate in the Temple cult because they considered it corrupted by the priesthood. See Flavius Josephus, *Ant.* 18.18-19.

²¹ Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways*, 47.

²² We will argue in chapter two that because of the challenge of *Torah*-keeping, it was difficult for Gentiles to fully convert to Judaism in the first century.

²³ This definition is similar to Cohen’s “A *Ioudaios* is someone who believes (or is supposed to believe) certain distinctive tenets, and/or follows (or is supposed to follow) certain distinctive practices; in other words, a *Ioudaios* is a Jew, someone who worships the God whose temple is in Jerusalem and who follows the ways of life of the Jews.” Cohen, *The Beginnings*, 78.

²⁴ See, for example, Paul’s discussion in 1 Cor 7:18-20, “Was a man already circumcised when he was called? He should not become uncircumcised. Was a man uncircumcised when he was called? He should not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God’s commands is what counts. Each person should remain in the situation they were in when God called them.”

Our task in this study is not to develop a nomenclature that does justice to the complexity of the first century Jewish movements. However, because of the intense scholarly debate over the terms “Judaism” and “Jew,” we will judiciously use them to make cautious claims about Jewish attitudes toward Gentiles.

II. Methodological Notes

A. The Historical Jesus

This study will not address the controversy surrounding what the historical Jesus believed or said regarding the eschatological crisis and Gentile inclusion; neither will this study attempt to show how the early Christian movement developed Jesus’ teaching on these subjects according to its situation. While these are historically significant objectives, we will attempt to set aside the question of the “historical Jesus” as much as possible. The goal of this study is not to *chart the development* of early Christian eschatology and missiology from Jesus to the close of the NT period. Our goal is *to show the relation between early Christian eschatology and the movement toward Gentile inclusion by analyzing certain literary motifs* (the motifs of growth, the wedding feast and the absent master) that come into expression through a series of parables in the Synoptic Gospels and *Gos. Thom.*

It will, however, be necessary to utilize a critical perspective to discern the basic outline and content of the tradition inherited by the early Christian writers so as to note the changes and modifications such writers made. This perspective regarding the redacting hand of the early Christian writers is not intended to bring Jesus’ original words to light. Rather, this perspective will underscore the changes and modifications made by the writers to the tradition as critical evidence for charting early Christian convictions on the delay of the Parousia as an opportunity for Gentile inclusion. Finally, especially in the first three chapters addressing the theological and

socio-political tensions behind the literary motifs of growth, wedding feast, and absent master, it will be necessary to make some brief comments on role of the early Christian movement in transmitting the message of Jesus and his successors.

B. Use of the Parables and Allegory

This study is primarily concerned with the delay of the *Parousia* as a reason for the inclusion of the Gentiles as expressed in the parables attributed to Jesus. Judging by the extant records of Jesus' teachings, parables were one of his primary forms of oral communication and teaching. According to C. H. Dodd, a parable is "a metaphor or simile drawn from nature or common life, arresting the hearer by its vividness or strangeness, and leaving the mind in sufficient doubt about its precise application to tease it into active thought."²⁵ Jesus' parables as we have received them function on two levels: they illuminate a point by means of using a commonly-known or everyday situation to illustrate a deeper meaning; or they can conceal a deeper meaning for those who are unable or unwilling to reflect more profoundly (e.g., Mark 4:10-12).²⁶ Craig Blomberg adds a third, "to win over its audience to accept a particular set of beliefs or act in a certain way."²⁷ The parables were "uttered in an actual situation of the life of Jesus" to address a conflict by providing a "justification, defense, attack, and even challenge" which required the hearer to make a decision.²⁸ Next, the compilers of this oral tradition, such as those of Q and the Markan tradition(s), collected, recorded, and arranged these parables according to the perspectives of their communities. Finally, the Gospel writers themselves reorganized and redacted the

²⁵ C. H. Dodd, *Parables of the Kingdom* (3rd ed.; London: Nisbet & Co., 1953), 16.

²⁶ Dodd, *Parables of the Kingdom*, 14. See also Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus* (2nd ed.; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972), 13; trans. of *Die Gleichnisse Jesu* (8th ed.; Gottingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1970).

²⁷ Craig Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables* (Downer's Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity Press, 1990), 53-54.

²⁸ Jeremias, *Parables*, 21.

compilations of parables according to their own literary and theological programs, sometimes changing the settings and adding allegorical features to the parables (though Jesus himself sometimes used allegory).²⁹

An allegory is an *extended metaphor* in which the characters/components represent realities beyond the immediate narrative context.³⁰ With the exception of simple similes, many of Jesus' parables have *allegorical significance* since they contain both literal and metaphorical meaning(s).³¹ The parables which we will analyze in this study are either allegories (e.g., the Weeds and Wheat, Wedding Feast/Great Banquet, and Talents/Minas) or have strong allegorical characteristics (e.g., the Mustard seed). In fact, allegorization is a special characteristic of the parables addressing the delay of the Parousia and Gentile inclusion.³²

The allegory was well known in the ancient world. In fact, many ancient Greek philosophers such as Plato, Plutarch, Heraclitus, etc. used allegory to assist in the interpretation and understanding of *Homer*.³³ The Hellenistic Jewish philosopher, Philo of Alexandria, is perhaps the most well-known ancient champion of allegory. Living in the final decades of the last century B.C. and the first half of the first century A.D., Philo makes great use of the allegorical interpretation of the OT in order to transform what he considers specific expressions of God's will into general principles for all.³⁴ Philo's allegorical methods had significant influence on

²⁹ Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables*, 35-40.

³⁰ Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables*, 30.

³¹ Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables*, 42.

³² Jeremias, *Parables*, 66.

³³ Karl Olav Sandnes, *The Challenge of Homer* (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 51, 55

³⁴ Sandnes, *The Challenge of Homer*, 68, writes, "Philo's use of allegory is based on the conviction that specific decrees issued in the Scriptures are specific expressions of God's general will for human beings. The specific becomes thus generally applicable with the help of allegory."

interpreters in the early Christian tradition such as Clement of Alexandria.³⁵ From the second-century onward, the Jewish rabbis created elaborate allegorical parables used to explain and illustrate sacred texts.³⁶ Throughout our study we will have the opportunity to compare parables from some of these apocryphal and extra-biblical sources to those that we will study in the Synoptic Gospels and the *Gos. Thom.* The purpose of such comparisons is not to suggest that there is any direct literary relationship. Instead, such comparisons shed light on the general use of allegorical and parabolic imagery even when the parables we are comparing are later in origin such as the rabbinical parables.

The primary texts for our study are the parables of the Mustard Seed (Mark 4:30-34//Luke 13:18-19//Matt 13:31-32//*Gos. Thom.* 20), the Weeds and the Wheat (Matt 13:24-30, 36-43//*Gos. Thom.* 57), the Wedding Feast/Banquet (Matt 22:1-14//Luke 14:15-23//*Gos. Thom.* 64), and the Talents/Minas (Matt 25:14-30//Luke 19:11-27). In my analysis of these parables, I discovered that they fall into three general categories based on their dominant literary motifs: (1) *growth*, (2) *wedding feast*, and (3) *absent master*. In addition to the collection of parables we will study, there are many other parables that can be classified under these three dominant literary motifs. However, these other parables were not of interest for this study for reasons outlined below.

Since this study seeks to demonstrate a literary-theological connection between the delay of the *Parousia* and the inclusion of the Gentiles in the Synoptic parables and the *Gos. Thom.*, the selection criteria for parables used in this study were two-fold. First, the parables selected must deal with the delay of the *Parousia*. Second, they must appeal to Gentile inclusion. These two criteria automatically excluded several parables mentioning the delay of the *Parousia* that might

³⁵ Sandnes, *The Challenge of Homer*, 129.

³⁶ Rueven Kipperwasser, "A Bizarre Invitation to a King's Banquet: The Metamorphosis of a Parable Tradition and the Transformation of an Eschatological Idea," *Proof* 33.2 (2014), 147-148.

otherwise be of interest such as the Virgins (Matt 25:1-13), the Wise and Foolish Servant (Matt 24:45-51//Luke 12:41-48), the Doorkeeper (Mark 13:34-37//Luke 12:35-38), the Persistent Widow (Luke 18:1-8), etc. Also, these criteria excluded several parables which address on Gentile inclusion such as the Tenants (Mark 12:1-12//Matt 21:33-46//Luke 20:9-19//*Gos. Thom.* 65) and the Shut Door (Luke 13:22-30).

Although these excluded parables do not combine the delay of the *Parousia* and Gentile inclusion, they are sufficiently interesting to be treated as background to the theme of the *Parousia's* delay as impetus for Gentile inclusion in chapters one, two, and three. Nearly every text in the NT referring to the delay of the *Parousia* and many texts mentioning Gentile inclusion will be briefly addressed at one point or another in our study in order to illuminate the connection between the delay and Gentile inclusion.

In our study we will use the time-honored tools of discerning and interpreting allegorical parables: narrative and literary context, synchronic and diachronic word and thematic studies, comparative analysis of the different attestations of parables, and, most importantly, literary analysis of the parable itself seeking to discover devices like surprises, repetitions, parallelisms, and internal structures. Generous interaction with secondary sources such as scholarly articles, commentaries, and books will help us avoid pitfalls associated with allegorical interpretation. Since there are no major textual issues in our collection of parables, comparatively little attention will be devoted to establishing the text and discussing conflicting manuscript evidence.

With regard to our treatment of the redaction of the Gospel parables, sayings, and narratives, we will utilize the “Two-Source Theory” which holds that Matthew and Luke had access to Mark and the lost sayings-source “Q” while writing their Gospels. We will further assume that

Matthew and Luke each had access to their own traditions for their unique material, “M” and “L” respectively.

C. Use of the *Gospel of Thomas*

In the course of this study we will have the opportunity to examine a number of Synoptic parables attributed to Jesus which have parallels in the *Gos. Thom.* Though known in late antiquity and quoted by Origin, Jerome, Hippolytus, and others, the *Gos. Thom.*, which is composed almost entirely of logia attributed to Jesus, was lost to the world of scholarship until its accidental rediscovery in 1945 at Nag Hammadi, Egypt.³⁷ While the study of the *Gos. Thom.* is popular in the field of biblical scholarship, the fact remains that only one Coptic manuscript and several fragments of the originally Greek document exist today.³⁸ For this reason and others, claims about the date of the *Gos. Thom.* and its relationship to the Synoptic Gospels are numerous and varied.³⁹ Scholars note that at some point the version of the *Gos. Thom.* now possessed was assembled or redacted by an editor who added many gnosticizing references.⁴⁰ However, many argue that the sayings in the *Gos. Thom.*, like those of the hypothetical Q, go back to a very early stage of Christian tradition and likely come from Palestine or Syria.⁴¹

³⁷ John Kloppenborg, *et al. Q Thomas Reader* (Sonoma, Calif.: Polebridge Press, 1990), 78. Several Greek fragments of *Gos. Thom.* were also discovered at the Oxyrhynchus site at the end of the nineteenth century.

³⁸ Richard Valantasis, *The Gospel of Thomas* (London: Routledge, 1997), 2.

³⁹ Valantasis, *The Gospel of Thomas*, 4, writes, “So there is not really a singular gospel, but two divergent textual traditions [the Coptic version and the Oxyrhynchus fragments]. This situation makes a precise and well-delineated description of the Gospel of Thomas problematic, because the Gospel of Thomas may refer to a number of different elements in its textual history.”

⁴⁰ H. E. W. Turner and Hugh Montifiore, *Thomas and the Evangelists* (London: SCM Press, 1962), 42. See also Risto Uro, *Thomas; Seeking the Historical Context of the Gospel of Thomas* (London: T & T Clark, 2003), 129. It is very difficult for modern scholars to find evidence for the editing of *Gos. Thom.* since it is a collection of often unrelated sayings not placed in any narrative structure. Valantasis, *The Gospel of Thomas*, 12.

⁴¹ Kloppenborg, *et al. Q Thomas Reader*, 92-93.

Furthermore, many parts of the *Gos. Thom.* show evidence of emerging from an early oral tradition.⁴²

The question that is most important for our purposes is the relationship between the *Gos. Thom.* and the Synoptics. Although many scholars of the *Gos. Thom.* argue that it is not dependent on the Synoptic Gospels, there are several portions of *Thomassine* text which clearly show their influence.⁴³ There is, of course, the possibility that the *Gos. Thom.* uses some of the very same sources as the Synoptic Gospels, thereby creating a parallel literary relationship between them. For the purposes of our study, we will assume that in its final redaction, the compiler of the *Gos. Thom.* did know of the Synoptic Gospels without necessarily being systematically dependent on them. I also acknowledge the possibility that *Gos. Thom.* employs sources used by the Synoptics as well. Unfortunately, because only one comparatively late manuscript of the *Gos. Thom.* exists (along with a handful of fragments), the decision between literary dependence and dependence on a common source may be impossible to make with any certainty.

D. Christian Anti-Judaism and the Jewish Rejection of Jesus and His Message in the First Century

As we explore Gentile inclusion in our texts, another closely related issue will come to the fore: the theme of the rejection of Jesus and the early Christian movement by the first century Jewish leadership and, by extension, the people of Israel in the mind of the early Christian authors (e.g., Rom 9-11). In fact, NT discussions of Gentile inclusion spring out of the experience of rejection as we will see in chapters three and seven (e.g., the parable of the Tenants

⁴² See Uro, *Thomas*, 106-133.

⁴³ See Uro, *Thomas*, 131, writes, “Moreover, a cogent theory about *Thomas*’ composition should be able to explain the complexity of evidence and avoid giving overly simplified answers. One of the most perplexing things in the gospel is its mixture of early-looking traditions with features that very probably derive from the canonical gospels.”

in Mark 12:1-12//Matt 21:33-46//Luke 20:9-19//*Gos. Thom.* 65). This raises a question: was it first century Judaism that rejected early Christianity or early Christianity that rejected first century Judaism? Perhaps, Judaism and early Christianity never came into intractable conflict in the first century at all and it was only later Christian authors who portrayed it as such.⁴⁴ Based on evidence from rabbinical writings, there is little doubt that by the early second-century, many influential figures in Judaism had labeled Christians as “*minim*” or “heretics.”⁴⁵ Thus, we can deduce that the process of separation was well underway at the time of the penning of many NT documents.

This study will presuppose that process of separation between the early Christian movement and first century Judaism began relatively early and sped up with the destruction of the Second Temple and the resulting crisis of identity for first century Judaism.⁴⁶ As many early Christian documents show, the basic claims of early Christianity with regard to Christ were unacceptable to the majority of first century Jews.⁴⁷ Though it was the early Christians themselves who tasted rejection at the hands of their co-religionists first, it didn’t take long before the feelings were

⁴⁴ David Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1988), 619.

⁴⁵ Adiel Schremer, *Brothers Estranged; Heresy, Christianity, and Jewish Identity in Late Antiquity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 96-97, writes, “Already by the early second century C.E., Christianity was recognized by *Roman officials* as a distinct religion, distinguished from Judaism, as one can infer both from Pliny the Younger and from Tacitus. It is difficult to imagine that an imperial discourse that distinguished Christians from Jews had no effect on Jews and Christians themselves. To be sure, this does not imply that *all* Christians were considered by all Jews in the same manner. However, Jews could not have avoided wondering about an identity question, which was produced by Roman discourse that *did* recognize such a difference, already by the beginning of the second century C.E. The chronological assignment of the rabbinic discourse of *minut* to the second century, which is implied by the attribution of many of the Tannaitic sayings pertaining to *minim* and *minut* to early-second-century rabbis, goes, therefore, hand in hand with a contemporary, broader discourse of the Empire.”

⁴⁶ Schremer, *Brothers Estranged*, 97.

⁴⁷ Flusser, *Judaism*, 620, notes, “For the majority of Jews, even the Christology contained in the NT was clearly unacceptable, not only because such a belief was unusual, but also because the whole cosmic drama of Christ and the superhuman nature of the task of Christ was in disharmony with the Jewish belief in the God who is One and whose name is One.”

shared by both sides based on the writings of the second century rabbis and church fathers such as Justin Martyr in his *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*.⁴⁸

The foregoing discussion springs in no way from a desire to advance an anti-Judaic academic agenda.⁴⁹ In the first century and beyond, early Christianity and what would become Rabbinic Judaism were competing “brothers” originating from the same stream of Israelite religion passed down through the millennia. The roughness of this competition accounts for the harsh language used by each to describe the other. However, there are deeper reasons why our analysis will not degenerate into academic anti-Judaism. All those who value the early Christian documents must acknowledge that they exist because of the Jewish religious genius. In truth, a scholar of the ancient biblical texts is in essence a “judeophile” of sorts. Finally, those who count the biblical texts as objects not only of academic inquiry but also of faith must count the Jewish people as their spiritual ancestors.

III. Summary of the Argument of This Study

Modern biblical scholarship generally supposes that Jesus and the early church expected an imminent *Parousia* (e.g., Matt 10:23; Mark 9:1//Matt 16:28//Luke 9:27; Mark 13:30//Matt 24:34//Luke 21:32; Mark 14:62//Matt 26:64; 1 Cor 7:29-31; Rom 13:11-12; and 1 Thess 5:1-3). Though not entirely unforeseen, the passage of time after Easter challenged early Christian hopes for an imminent *Parousia* and required the contemplation of a delay (e.g., Matt 25:5; Matt 25:19//Luke 19:12, Luke 18:7; Luke 17:22; and 2 Pet 3:9). The early Christian tradition adapted several literary motifs to give the delay parenetic significance. However, three of these literary

⁴⁸ Schremer, *Brothers Estranged*, 50.

⁴⁹ Geza Vermes vividly writes, “In the shadow of the chimneys of the death-camps, anti-Judaism, even academic anti-Judaism, has become not only unfashionable but obscene.” Geza Vermes, *Jesus and the World of Judaism* (London: SCM Press, 1988), 67.

motifs, the images of growth, the absent master, and the wedding feast became especially relevant to the early Christian tradition as it came to grips with the challenges of the *Parousia*'s delay, the rejection of Jesus' message by the Jewish leadership, and the relatively ambivalent view of contemporary Judaism to Gentile inclusion. For those disappointed by the Jewish rejection of Jesus and the ongoing passage of time after the Resurrection, the *Parousia*'s delay provided an impetus to seek the inclusion of Gentiles (Mark 13:10//Matt 24:14//Luke 21:24; Matt 28:16-20; Acts 1:8; 13:46; 2 Pet 3:9; and Rom 11:25-27) into the Christian community. The early Christian tradition employed the literary motifs of growth (as found in the parables of the Mustard Seed [Mark 4:30-34//Luke 13:18-19//Matt 13:31-32//*Gos. Thom.* 20], and the Weeds [Matt 13:24-30, 36-43//*Gos. Thom.* 57]), the wedding feast (as found in the parable Wedding Banquet/Feast [Matt 22:1-14//Luke 14:15-23//*Gos. Thom.* 64]), and the absent master (as found in the parable of the Talents/Minas [Matt 25:14-30//Luke 19:11-27]) to express the delay of the *Parousia* as an opportunity for Gentile inclusion into the Christian community.

CHAPTER ONE

THE DELAYED *PAROUSIA* AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE EARLY CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT

The goal of this study is to show how the early Christian movement utilized the literary motifs of *growth*, *absent master*, and *wedding feast* in the Synoptic parables to express the delay of the *Parousia* as a reason to include Gentiles in the Christian community. These three literary motifs represent the early Christian community's attempt to address the delay of the *Parousia* and two other related challenges: the sentiment of ambivalence to Gentile inclusion (Chapter Two) and the experience of rejection from first century Jewish groups (Chapter Three) in the decades following Easter. In order to understand these literary motifs, we must explore the three challenges that the early Christian movement intended them to address. The first and most important of these challenges for our study is the delay of the *Parousia* itself.

I. Introduction: The Challenge of the *Parousia*'s Delay

No matter what position one holds with respect to whether or not Jesus and his earliest successors considered the possibility of millennia passing between the events of Easter and the present day, we must acknowledge that the *Parousia*'s delay caused much consternation for the early Christian movement.¹ In existing early Christian writings, there is ample evidence of hope for an imminent eschatological deliverance. As the decades passed, this unrequited hope led to shifts in the eschatological outlook of the movement.

We need not look further than the *Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah*, a composite work of Jewish-Christian origin² which betrays a preoccupation with the delay of the *Parousia* in a section (3:13-4:22) dated to the end of the first century³ or the beginning of the second.⁴ *Mart.*

¹ John G. Gager, *Kingdom and Community, the Social World of Early Christianity* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1975), 43.

² M. A. Knibb, "Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah," in *OTP*, 2:143-155, 147.

³ Knibb, "Martyrdom," 2:149.

⁴ C. Detlef G. Müller, "The Ascension of Isaiah," in *New Testament Apocrypha* (ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 2:604.

Ascen. Isa. 3:21-23 claims, “And afterwards, at his [Christ’s] approach, his disciples will abandon the teaching of the twelve apostles, and their faith, and their love, and their purity. And there will be much contention at his coming and his approach.”⁵ As the hope of an imminent *Parousia* receded with the passage time, the author of this section of *Mart. Ascen. Isa.* suggests that some in the early Christian community were losing confidence in the trustworthiness of this messianic prophecy.⁶

Another excellent example is the author of *1 Clement* who, near the close of the apostolic era, decries those in the early Christian movement who doubted the promises of Christ’s return: “Wretched are the double-minded, which doubt in their soul and say, these things we did hear in the days of our fathers also, and behold we have grown old, and none of these things have befallen us.”⁷ In Clement’s words we can hear the challenge posed to the early Christian movement by the unexpected tarrying of the Son of Man.

The words of *1 Clem.* are echoed in 2 Pet 3:3-4: “First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. They will say, ‘Where is this coming he promised? Ever since our fathers died, everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation.’”⁸ The Christian community which received this epistle was obviously struggling to come to grips with the non-occurrence of the *Parousia* and the resulting attacks of certain “scoffers” who took this as evidence of false teachings. In response, the author of 2 Peter “grants that the *Parousia* has not yet occurred” and instead “interprets the ‘non-occurrence’ as only a *delay* of the eschatological vindication and, in fact, argues that the delay is divinely

⁵ Trans. Knibb, “Martyrdom,” 2:143-176.

⁶ David Dunbar, “The Delay of the *Parousia* in Hippolytus,” VC 37 (1983), 313-314.

⁷ *1 Clem.* 23:3 (J.B. Lightfoot translation). The original text of the second half of 23:3 reads, Ταῦτα ἠκούσαμεν καὶ ἐπὶ τῶν πατέρων ἡμῶν, καὶ ἰδοὺ, γεγηράκαμεν, καὶ οὐδὲν ἡμῖν τούτων συμβέβηκεν.

⁸ Unless otherwise noted, all English biblical quotations are from the *NIV*.

motivated . . . an indication of God’s intention that all humanity enter ‘into the eternal kingdom.’”⁹

Moving from the end of the NT era to the beginning, we are confronted with the same issue (though expressed in different terms) in 1 Thessalonians, one of the earliest Christian writings.¹⁰ The problem the Apostle Paul addresses in 1 Thess 4:13-18 is the death (literally—“falling asleep” or κοιμάομαι) of Christians who expected a final eschatological resolution before the end of their lives.¹¹ This very situation, which has a parallel in the parable of the Virgins (Matt 25:1-13), came about due to the ever-lengthening period between the events of Easter and the *Parousia*.¹² The text of Paul’s letter in 4:13 shows that he is responding pastorally to a situation of grieving (λυπέομαι) in the Christian community not only because of the death of cherished loved-ones, but because such deaths were evidence that certain eschatological hopes were not being fulfilled according to the timeline that the community expected.¹³ Therefore, Paul does not want the church to be ignorant (4:13) of the fact that the dead would participate fully in the

⁹ Steven J. Kraftchick, *Jude, 2 Peter* (ANTC; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 160.

¹⁰ I. H. Marshall, *1-2 Thessalonians* (NCBC; Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1983), 20-23.

¹¹ Commentators are not in agreement as to whether the recipients of 1 Thess 4:13-18 understood the concept of a *Parousia* before the reception of the teaching in 1Thess 5:1-11 or whether Paul was writing 5:1-11 to correct a misunderstanding of the concept of the *Parousia* that developed after he himself had taught it during his first visit to Thessalonica. In the former situation, the Thessalonians could have thought that in light of Christ’s resurrection (which would have been considered the definitive eschatological event), Thessalonian believers would not die. See C. L. Mearns, “Early Eschatological Development in Paul: The Evidence of I and II Thessalonians,” *NTS* 27 (1981): 138-139. On the other hand, if Paul had taught the Thessalonian believers about the *Parousia* already, then the problem in 1 Thess 4:13-18 was that Thessalonian believers were dying before a *Parousia* event that they thought would be realized in their own lifetimes. (e.g., John 21:21-23). It would seem that the statement in 5:1 (“Now, brothers, about times and dates we do not need to write to you, for you know [οἶδα] very well”) indicates that Paul did in fact teach something about the *Parousia* in his first visit. See Ernest Best, *A Commentary on the First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians* (HNTC; New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1972), 203.

¹² Vicky Balabanski, *Eschatology in the Making: Mark, Matthew and the Didache* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 52. Balabanski writes: “Nevertheless, the juxtaposition of these two problems – the delay of the *Parousia* and the deaths of community members both in Matthew 25:5-7a and in the Thessalonian community suggests that the deaths provided a focus against which the implications of the delay of the *Parousia* were perceived.” Balabanski, *Eschatology*, 52.

¹³ Joseph Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1997), 68.

coming deliverance of the *Parousia*. In 1 Thess 4:13-18 we see at least one way that the early Christian community addressed the delay of the eschatological fulfillment it longed for.

This chapter will address the *significance* of the delay of the *Parousia* in the early Christian movement. In preparation for our analysis of the literary motifs of growth, the wedding feast, and the absent master in the Synoptic parables, I will argue that the challenge posed by the delay of the *Parousia* was one of three motivations (the other two being the predominantly ambivalent attitude to Gentile inclusion and the rejection of Jesus and his message by influential first century Jewish groups) that Jewish-Christian communities adopted to justify a more inclusive attitude to the Gentiles. The broad strokes of this argument can be found in John G. Gager's book, *Kingdom and Community: the Social World of Early Christianity*, albeit in the form of a psycho-social analysis.¹⁴

I will begin my analysis in Chapter One by examining the significance of the delay of the *Parousia* from two points of view prominent in modern scholarship. First, I will examine the significance of the delay from the dominant scholarly view that the earliest Christians had *no concept of the possibility of a delay*. Next, I will examine the significance of the delay from a competing scholarly perspective that the early Christian movement *hoped for short interim but reckoned with the possibility of a delay of an indeterminate length*.¹⁵

In the final portion of this chapter, I will argue for the perspective of this study, namely that the delay of the *Parousia*, while not altogether unexpected, was an unwelcome reality which demanded serious reflection and the *eventual* attachment of significance. The early Christian

¹⁴ Gager, *Kingdom and Community*, 43-46. I will further develop Gager's ideas in Chapter Four as a sociological explanation of the literary phenomenon of the correlation between the delay of the *Parousia* and Gentile inclusion in the early Christian texts.

¹⁵ A third possible view on delay is that the early Christian movement was, from the beginning, completely under the expectation that the *Parousia* would be delayed. However, this viewpoint cannot be maintained in light of the documentary evidence.

movement came to view the delay as a divinely appointed time for the inclusion of Gentiles in its communities. By means of several dominical sayings not treated later I will develop this concept of the significance of the delay embryonically in Chapter One. In Chapters Five through Seven, however, I will tackle the significance of the delay of the *Parousia* for Gentile inclusion by means of the literary motifs mentioned above.

II. **The Dominant Scholarly Perspective: An Unforeseen Delay of the *Parousia* Motivated the Early Christian Movement to Reformulate Its Message**

The majority of modern NT scholars have adopted, at least in broad strokes, the understanding of the delay of the *Parousia* first popularized by Albert Schweitzer.¹⁶ Schweitzer and his modern advocates argue that Jesus' successors in the early Christian movement expected an immediate eschatological crisis and deliverance after the Crucifixion.¹⁷ They were surprised by the ever-lengthening period after Easter and thus found it necessary to alter Jesus' eschatological pronouncements (which, according to this view, all pointed to an imminent or immediate eschatological crisis) to account for the delay. In an oft-quoted portion of his work, *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* (translated in English under the title, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*), Schweitzer writes, "The whole history of 'Christianity' down to the present day, that is to say the real inner history of it, is based on the 'delay of the *Parousia*,' i.e., the failure of the *Parousia* to materialize, the abandonment of eschatology, and progress and completion of the 'de-eschatologizing' of the religion which has been connected with it."¹⁸ G. E.

¹⁶ Jörg Frey, "New Testament Eschatology—an Introduction," in *Eschatology of the New Testament and Some Related Documents* (ed. Jan G. van der Watt; WUNT 315; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 9, notes that Schweitzer borrowed much of his influential viewpoint from eighteenth century scholar Hermann Samuel Reimarus.

¹⁷ John Kloppenborg, "As One Unknown without a Name? Co-Opting the Apocalyptic Jesus," in *Apocalypticism, Anti-Semitism and the Historical Jesus* (JSNTSup 275; ed. John Kloppenborg and John Marshall; London: T & T Clark, 2005), 11.

¹⁸ Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (ed. John Bowden, trans. W. Montgomery *et al.*, 1st complete ed., Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 328; trans. of *Von Reimarus zu Wrede: eine Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* (J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1906). In Schweitzer's view, there was more than one

Ladd well summarizes this viewpoint, “The prevailing tendency is to accept the sayings about the imminence of the Kingdom as authentic on the grounds that the church never would invent sayings that were not fulfilled . . . When the *Parousia* did not occur, the church had to adjust to the delay of the *Parousia* and this is taken as one of the determinative facts in the development of Christian doctrine.”¹⁹ In the end, the broad strokes of Schweitzer’s viewpoint on the delay of the *Parousia* have found acceptance in mainstream scholarship.²⁰ Amos N. Wilder writes, “Today there are few to disagree with Schweitzer among NT critics as regards the main point. Almost all feel that a flood of light is thrown upon him [Jesus] and his teaching and the early church by recognizing that he expected the end of the age . . . in his own generation, if not in the very year of his ministry.”²¹

Another reformulation of Schweitzer’s basic thesis by Erich Grässer argues that Jesus conceived of the arrival of the eschatological crisis in the near-term future.²² When the expected event did not occur, the early Christian movement inserted explanations referring to the uncertainty of the timing of the *Parousia*, and finally its outright *delay*.²³ While perhaps it was

instance of Jesus “misjudging” the timing of the eschatological crisis. For example, Matt 10:23 (Jesus’ sending of the Twelve) represents his first realization that he must return as the messianic Son of Man, “He [Jesus] tells them [the disciples] in plain words that he does not expect to see them back in the present age. The *Parousia* of the Son of man, which is logically and temporally identical with the dawn of the kingdom, will take place before they have completed a hasty journey through the cities of Israel to announce it.” However, when the disciples returned, Jesus was forced to come to grips with a new reality—his messianic suffering and death would initiate a series of supernatural events leading up to his immediate *Parousia*. Schweitzer, *Quest*, 337.

¹⁹ George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 209.

²⁰ David Batstone, “Jesus, Apocalyptic, and World Transformation,” *ThTo* 49.3 (1992), 388, writes, “The ‘failure’ of the kingdom of God to arrive is a primary hermeneutical key in modern Jesus studies. Since the consensus of that research maintains that Jesus expected an imminent kingdom of God, scholars have been compelled either to transpose a transcendent, non-material referent onto Jesus’ proclamation . . . or, somehow, to adjust the ‘fact’ that he had wrongly foreseen the immediate end of the world.”

²¹ Amos Wilder, *Eschatology and Ethics in the Teaching of Jesus* (rev. ed.; New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1950), 38.

²² Erich Grässer, *Das Problem der Parusieverzögerung in den synoptischen Evangelien und in der Apostelgeschichte* (ZNW 22; Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1959).

²³ Grässer, *Das Problem*, 77, 127.

not his goal in the outset, like Schweitzer before him Grässer has “proceeded to exegete the Synoptic Gospels and Acts using the delay of the parousia as the hermeneutical key to distinguish layers of authentic dominical tradition from early Christian formulations and to determine the age of a particular Tradition.”²⁴

Finally, we should note (as I have in the preface) that many who adhere to the basic reasoning of the dominant perspective on the delay of the *Parousia* would argue that Jesus himself made no claim that *he would come again* as an eschatological figure of judgment and vindication.²⁵ Instead, like John the Baptist (e.g., Matt 3:7-10), Jesus preached an imminent *eschatological crisis* which failed to materialize after his climatic death. Thus, the entire concept of the *Parousia* (as Christ’s final eschatological visitation) was itself a literary creation of the early Christian tradition trying to account for the non-appearance of the eschatological crisis that should have been precipitated by Jesus’ prophetic ministry to the “lost sheep of Israel (Matt 10:6).”²⁶

As is the case with any attempt to find a common thread in a myriad of scholarly viewpoints, my effort to describe the dominant scholarly view of timing of the *Parousia* may be somewhat

²⁴ Balabanski, *Eschatology in the Making*, 7.

²⁵ Robinson, *Jesus and His Coming*, 83, writes, “But, in any case, the relevant point here is that what is applied by the Evangelists to the *Parousia* has been found once more to have its reference to the imminent catastrophe which must spell the doom of the nation. In these sayings Jesus is again referring to the same crisis, spiritual and physical, of which the parables spoke. But here he is no longer warning the Jews to avert it, but preparing the disciples for their response to the inevitable. For, unless they are alert to the judgments of God, they too will perish.”

²⁶ According to T. Francis Glasson, Jesus looked forward to a crisis precipitated by his rejection at the hands of the Jewish leadership. When no crisis came to the fore, the early Christian tradition connected Jesus’ sayings with the concept of the *Parousia* based on the OT teaching of the *Day of the Lord*. Glasson argues, “It is easy to understand that some who had been looking for a display of power and a catastrophic judgment were frankly disappointed with the first advent. The early Christians . . . looked for this same Jesus to come back and fulfil [*sic*] the main part of His task in a more realistic spirit. They were too near the life of Jesus to grasp its significance or to foresee its results. And so, instead of abandoning their earlier expectations, many merely projected them into the future.” Glasson, *The Second Advent*, 209.

simplistic.²⁷ However, the claim that the early Christian movement altered its traditions suggesting an imminent or immediate eschatological crisis to reflect the reality of a delay²⁸ is indeed a very popular concept within a large segment current scholarship in NT eschatology.²⁹

A. Evidence of the Early Christian Community's Redaction of Sayings Regarding an Imminent or Immediate *Parousia*

According to this dominant view, the editing of the material attributed to Jesus occurred on two levels. On the first level, there was a redaction of Jesus' sayings and parables hinting at an imminent or immediate *Parousia* or eschatological crisis to reflect the possibility of delay. Good examples of this can be found in the so-called "crisis-parables" which speak of an absent master or bridegroom delaying his return to the chagrin of those awaiting him (e.g., the parables of the Doorkeeper [Mark 13:34-37//Luke 12:35-38], Wise and Foolish Servants [Matt 24:45-51//Luke 12:41-48], the Talents/Minas [Matt 25:14-30//Luke 19:11-27], and the Great Banquet/Wedding Feast [Matt 22:1-14// Luke 14:15-23//*Gos. Thom.* 64]). Originally, Jesus emphasized in these parables "the sudden interruption of the tribulation" while the early Christian movement altered the crisis-parables to underscore the message of readiness for the end of the tribulation when the *Parousia* would occur.³⁰ J.A.T. Robinson offers a helpful summary:

²⁷ For example, I have not addressed Rudolf Bultmann's attempt to bring existentialist thought to bear on the NT issue of the *Parousia*'s timing. Bultmann argued that Jesus' proclamation was essentially a "non-worldly" and an "a-temporal" effort to bring humanity to the "crisis of decision" vis-à-vis God and his claims. See Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus* (Berlin: Deutsche Bibliothek, 1926), 35-41. See also Frey, "New Testament Eschatology," 13-14. However, Bultmann does accept a futurist interpretation of certain "mythological" events described in the NT like the Resurrection and *Parousia*. D. E. Aune, "The Significance of the Delay of the *Parousia* for Early Christianity," in *Current Issues in Biblical and Patristic Interpretation* (ed. Merrill C. Tenney, *et al.*; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 90-92, writes, "While Bultmann appears to accept the futurity of the Kingdom of God in the teachings of Jesus (in continuity with Weiss and Schweitzer), in reality he stresses the existential dimensions of Jesus' eschatological message to the neglect of the temporal dimensions." While it is true that Bultmann's existentialist perspective offers a unique view on the question of the *Parousia*'s timing, in the final analysis his perspective is not incompatible with Schweitzer's futuristic orientation. See Kloppenborg, "As One Unknown," 13

²⁸ Steven C. Smalley, "The Delay of the *Parousia*," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 83.1 (1964): 43.

²⁹ Frey, "New Testament Eschatology," 25. See Aune, "The Significance of the Delay," 87.

³⁰ Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables*, 51.

All of these describe an unexpected coming which will lay bare the difference between those who are vigilant and careful for their responsibilities and those who are not. By the Evangelists, again, the parables are applied, quite naturally to the period in which they lived—to the post-resurrection Church and to the return of Jesus at the *Parousia*. But is this their original setting? Details of exegesis may be questioned, but from the conclusion of the matter as Professor Jeremias states it I would find it impossible to dissent: ‘The *Parousia* parables which we have discussed’, he says, ‘were originally a group of crisis-parables. They were intended to arouse a deluded people and their leaders to a realization of the awful gravity of the moment. The catastrophe will come as unexpectedly as the nocturnal housebreaker, as the bridegroom arriving at midnight, the master of the house returning late from the wedding feast . . . See that you be not taken unawares!’³¹

On the second level, according to the dominant viewpoint there was a wholesale creation or complete reworking of Jesus’ sayings and parables to positively lay out the case for delay. Sayings often cited in this category include Mark 13:10; Matt 24:14; 28:18-20; Acts 1:6-8; etc. Those who support the dominant position as popularized by Albert Schweitzer, contend that these sayings are anachronistic insertions of the early Christian movement because they portray Jesus addressing a situation which would not exist until half a century after Easter.³² It is important to note that all three of these sayings, which are considered creations of the early Christian movement or heavily edited insertions, *refer to a long period of time during which the church will be occupied with Gentile inclusion.*³³

³¹ Robinson, *Jesus and His Coming*, 69.

³² A good example is Wilson, who, in his book on Gentile mission in Luke-Acts, develops five points in his argument that Mark 13:10 is an insertion of the early church: 1. It was clumsily placed between connected sayings. 2. It uses “the language of early Christian preaching.” 3. Jesus expected the end in his own generation, not after an extended mission. 4. “With such an unequivocal command,” Wilson wonders why “there was so much disagreement in the early Church over Gentile mission.” 5. Mark 13:10 is omitted in Luke-Acts. Stephan G. Wilson, *The Gentiles and the Gentile Mission in Luke-Acts* (Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 23, ed. Matthew Black; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 19-20.

³³ More recently, Osvaldo Vena, *The Parousia and Its Rereadings; The Development of the Eschatological Consciousness in the Writings of the New Testament* (New York: Peter Lang, 2001), 109-268, offers a strong argument for the dominant view of the timing of the Parousia. Vena notes the development in the view of the *Parousia*’s timing between three time-periods during which NT was written: (1) A.D. 49-65/66 (exemplified by the authentic Pauline epistles); A.D. 65-85 (exemplified by the Gospel of Mark and the other Synoptics); and A.D. 90-125 (exemplified by 2 Peter and the Pastoral Epistles). During the first period of time, the *Parousia* is considered

There are several parables which, according to the dominant view, suggest a long period of time and provide evidence of a heavy redactional hand or represent a new creation. One such parable is the Parable of the Virgins (Matt 25:1-13), a parable which is logically grouped among the “crisis parables.” According to the dominant viewpoint, this parable shows evidence of extensive editing (much more so than the other “crisis parables”) long after the times of Jesus and his earliest successors. First of all, the parable is a *Parousia* allegory,³⁴ which is indicative of the editorial activities of the early Christian movement since Jesus allegedly eschewed this genre.³⁵ There is also the anachronistic reference in the parable about the bridegroom’s delay (χρονίζοντος δὲ τοῦ νυμφίου) which originates from early Christian editors. R. T. France notes, “The inclusion of this detail should probably be taken as an acknowledgement that time had passed since Jesus promised to return.”³⁶ Finally, there is the “lesson” of v. 13 (“Therefore keep watch [γρηγορεῖτε οὖν], because you do not know the day or the hour”) which is part of the parenesis of the early Christian movement and does not fit with the fact that both the *wise* and the *foolish* virgins fell asleep.³⁷ According to the dominant viewpoint on the timing of the *Parousia*, the parable of the Virgins is an example of the early Christian movement’s “rewriting” of its documents to account for the delay.³⁸

imminent and the focus is on ethical preparation and hasty mission. During the second, the anxiety of the early Christian community regarding the delay must be addressed and the concept of Gentile mission developed as an explanation for the prolonged period. Finally, during the last period, the future-orientation recedes and a preoccupation with false-teaching (as a defense against detractors of the *Parousia* doctrine) emerges. See Vena, *The Parousia*, 257-268. Vena’s complex argument essentially reproduces the dominant scholarly position on the *Parousia*’s timing as I have described it above.

³⁴ Jeremias, *Parables*, 51.

³⁵ Blomberg, *Parables*, 34.

³⁶ Richard T. France, *The Gospel of Mark* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 181.

³⁷ Evald Lövestam, *Spiritual Wakefulness in the New Testament* (LUÅ; trans. W. F. Salisbury; Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1963), 121-22.

³⁸ It is interesting to note that certain details from Matthew’s parable of the Virgins appear in the Lukan parabolic saying of 13:22-30. Some striking parallels between the two include the closing of the door to the banquet hall in Matt 25:10 (cf. Luke 13:25), the pleading of the foolish virgins in 25:11 (cf. Luke 13:25), and the response of

Another example which suggests a long period before the *Parousia* is Matthew's parable of the Weeds (Matt 13:24-30, 36-43). Like the parable of the Virgins, those who hold the dominant view see its allegorical character as evidence of significant redaction.³⁹ Because this parable will be treated later in the study, we will not focus on it here. However, the parable of the Weeds contains two characteristics which cause those who hold the dominant opinion to assign it a place amongst the most heavily edited parables in the NT. First, it suggests the passage of a long period of time before the eschatological crisis because of the extended period between the appearance of the weeds amongst the wheat and the harvest.⁴⁰ According to the dominant concept of the timing of the *Parousia*, Jesus and his immediate successors had no conception on a long period of time elapsing before the eschatological crisis. Secondly, the interpretation of the "fields" being the "world" (ὁ δὲ ἄγρός ἐστὶν ὁ κόσμος) in 13:38 reflects an effort to include the Gentile nations in the reach of the Gospel.⁴¹ According to the dominant viewpoint, the suggestion of Gentile inclusion is anachronistic (since such sentiment didn't occur until long after Jesus' ministry) and is thus only attributable to Matthew who was writing many decades

the master to the foolish virgins in 25:12 (cf. Luke 13:25). What is even more interesting, especially for the purposes of this dissertation, is that Luke concludes his parabolic saying with Jesus' logion in 13:28-29 about people coming from the "east, west, north, and south" to participate in the eschatological banquet with the patriarchs (par. Matt 8:11-12). While some argue that the original context of the "East/West" saying is the return of Jewish exiles at the eschaton, in Matthew (and probably in Luke) the text implies the exclusion of unrepentant Israel and the inclusion of receptive Gentiles in the eschatological kingdom. The net result of Luke's use of the logia Matthew has incorporated into the parable of the Virgins (e.g., the closed door, the pleas, and the master's response) and the "East/West" saying subtly suggests a connection between delay (being unprepared to enter into the delayed eschatological banquet) and Gentile inclusion (the streaming in of the Gentiles from the east and west into the inheritance Israel has rejected). Unfortunately, the connection is admittedly tenuous and therefore I have chosen not to treat Luke's parabolic sayings of 13:22-30 as part of my analysis of the literary motif of wedding banquet in connection with the delay of the *Parousia* and Gentile inclusion. See Chapter Three for more discussion of Luke 13:22-30.

³⁹ Jeremias, *Parables*, 81.

⁴⁰ Donald Hagner, *Matthew 14-28* (WBC 33b; Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995), 382.

⁴¹ W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew VIII-XVIII* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 428.

later when the Gentile mission was already underway.⁴² Jesus and his earliest successors believed that the period before the eschatological crisis was so short that there was no time for a Gentile mission and barely enough time for a short preaching tour targeted at the Palestinian Jews.

B. Sayings of an Imminent or Immediate *Parousia*: Mark 13:30//Matt 24:34//Luke 21:32; Matt 10:23b; Mark 9:1//Matt 16:28//Luke 9:27; and Mark 14:62//Matt 26:64//Luke 22:69

In addition to the sayings which, according to the arguments of the dominant view, have undergone significant editing or have been created “from scratch,” there exists a collection of four sayings which have been largely untouched by redaction because of a desire on the part of the Gospel writers to conserve the parables and sayings of Jesus.⁴³ These sayings seem to support the dominant view that Jesus and his successors anticipated an immediate or imminent eschatological crisis.

The first texts we should consider in this regard are the so-called “generation sayings” of Mark 13:30//Matt 24:34//Luke 21:32. This short saying (Mark 13:30: “I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened”) is one of the most oft-quoted evidences bolstering the case for Jesus’ near-expectation and the subsequent invention of the delay motif by the disappointed early church.⁴⁴ In the Synoptic Gospels, this saying is couched in the middle of the “Olivet Discourse” which begins with a discussion about the destruction of the Second Temple (Mark 13:1-4//Matt 24:1-3//Luke 21:5-7) and continues to treat subjects such as the great eschatological tribulation, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the

⁴² Micheal Bird, *Jesus and the Origins of Gentile Mission* (LNTS 331, ed. Mark Goodacre; London: T & T Clark, 2006), 8.

⁴³ See Blomberg, *Parables*, 128.

⁴⁴ Beasley-Murray writes: “The majority of exegetes through the centuries to the present day have viewed Mark 13:30 as relating to the events leading up to and including the *Parousia* of Christ.” George R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Last Days* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, 1993), 443.

signs accompanying the *Parousia* of the Son of Man. The composite nature of the Olivet Discourse should make any interpreter weary, but, those who hold the dominant viewpoint find the antecedent of “these things” (ταῦτα πάντα) in the discussion of the *Parousia* of Mark 13:24-27.⁴⁵ Thus the following equivalency would result: “*This generation will certainly not pass away until all these things [i.e., the signs of the *Parousia* and the *Parousia* itself] have happened.*” According to this interpretation of the generation sayings, Jesus expected an imminent *Parousia* or eschatological crisis within the lifespan of his generation.

The second saying often appealed to by those scholars holding the dominant view of the timing of the *Parousia* is Matt 10:23b, “I tell you the truth, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes.” Matthew 10:23b is part of Jesus’ sending of the Twelve to continue his evangelistic and healing ministry amongst the “lost sheep of Israel” (10:5-6). Schweitzer originally argued that in 10:23b Jesus appealed to an imminent manifestation of the messianic Son of Man that did not materialize during his disciples’ short preaching tour in Israel, thus forcing Jesus to come to grips with the first delay of the *Parousia*.⁴⁶ As we mentioned above, more recent interpreters have simply interpreted 10:23b as a justification for the disciples’ ministry being exclusively focused on Palestinian Jews (10:5-6) because the time before the eschatological crisis was so short. Thus, according to the dominant view, Matt 10:23b reveals Jesus as completely unaware of the long period of time before the *Parousia*, so much so that he rejected the possibility of Gentile inclusion in the preaching of the Gospel.

⁴⁵ Oscar Cullmann, “The Return of Christ,” in *The Early Church* (ed. A.J.B. Higgins; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956), 151-152.

⁴⁶ Schweitzer, *Quest*, 327-328.

The third saying often utilized by adherents of the dominant view of the timing of the *Parousia* to justify their position is Mark 9:1//Matt 16:28//Luke 9:27. In all three Synoptic Gospels, Jesus' saying ("I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power") occurs immediately after a *Parousia* prediction (Mark 8:38//Matt 16:27//Luke 9:26) and before the Transfiguration narrative (Mark 9:2-13//Matt 17:1-13//Luke 9:28-36). The phrase "Son of Man coming in his kingdom" (τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐρχόμενον ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ αὐτοῦ) supposedly points toward the *Parousia* of the Son of Man, thus indicating that *at least some* of Jesus' disciples will not die before the great eschatological event. According to those holding to the dominant view of the timing of the *Parousia* (and even a few who do not), this saying shows that Jesus believed his *Parousia* to be a matter of years at most.⁴⁷ Because of its placement before the Transfiguration account, another possible explanation for Mark 9:1//Matt 16:28//Luke 9:27 is that it refers to the Transfiguration itself which is a kind of proleptic *Parousia*.⁴⁸

A final saying which suggests an imminent or immediate *Parousia* comes from Mark 14:62//Matt 26:64//Luke 22:69. All three Synoptic Gospels place this saying in Jesus' early morning trial before the Sanhedrin. The High Priest questions Jesus as to whether he is the Messiah, the "Son of God." Using a typically Jewish circumlocution for God ("the Mighty One" or δυνάμεως), Jesus responds in the affirmative: "And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven" (Mark 14:62).

In content, the sayings are parallel except that Luke omits the quotation of Dan 7:13 which in Mark 14:62//Matt 26:64 is a reference to the *Parousia* itself (καὶ ἐρχόμενον μετὰ τῶν νεφελῶν

⁴⁷ Beasley-Murray, *Christ and the Future*, 183.

⁴⁸ Ben Witherington III, *Jesus, Paul and the End of the World* (Downer's Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 39.

τοῦ οὐρανοῦ).⁴⁹ Glasson holds that “the reply of Jesus to the High Priest at His trial . . . is sometimes regarded as the clearest reference to the *Parousia* in the words of Jesus. Some have gone so far as to say that it is doubtful whether the earlier Gospel tradition contained explicit predictions of the Second Advent apart from this saying.”⁵⁰

A complicating factor in our brief analysis of this text is Jesus’ self-appellation, “The Son of Man” or ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. The scholarly debate over the term “Son of Man” is substantial,⁵¹ so we can offer only a brief summary. Many argue that the “Son of Man” as an eschatological figure is a theological invention of the early Christian community and therefore couldn’t have been used by Jesus to refer to himself in Mark 14:62//Matt 26:64//Luke 22:69.⁵² It is possible, of course, that Jesus could have used “Son of Man” to refer to another apocalyptic figure resembling what is found in Dan 7:13. Later, after Easter, the early Christian community identified Jesus as the apocalyptic Son of Man.⁵³ A different nuance on this hypothesis is the position that while Jesus did in fact call himself the “Son of Man,” he meant a rather generic reference to himself as a “human being” and not an apocalyptic figure as in Dan 7:13 to which Mark 14:62 appeals.⁵⁴ Thus, ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου is a literal translation of the Semitic phrase “son of man” which could mean a particular man or mankind in general.⁵⁵ Others argue, in contrast, that the eschatological perspective of the “Son of Man” present in writings like the

⁴⁹ The parallels between Dan 7:13 (LXX: ἰδοὺ ἐπὶ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ὡς υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου ἦρχετο) and Matt 26:64//Mark 16:42 are quite interesting.

⁵⁰ Glasson, *The Second Advent*, 63-64.

⁵¹ I. Howard Marshall, “The Son of Man in Contemporary Debate,” in *The Historical Jesus* (4 vols.; ed. Craig Evans; London: Routledge, 2004), 3.89.

⁵² Dunn, *Christianity in the Making*, 1.736.

⁵³ I. Howard Marshall, “The Son of Man,” 3:91.

⁵⁴ Borg, *Conflict*, 231-227.

⁵⁵ I. Howard Marshall, “The Son of Man,” 3:86

Similitudes of Enoch (1 En. 37-71) fits well with Jesus' eschatological awareness.⁵⁶ Thus sayings like Mark 14:62//Matt 26:64//Luke 22:69 can be attributed to Jesus.⁵⁷ While proponents of the dominant view of the timing of the *Parousia* may disagree about whether or not Jesus used the term, "Son of Man," there is consensus that the term as it is used in Mark 14:62//Matt 26:64//Luke 22:69 shows an apocalyptic consciousness bearing the mark of the early Christian community after Easter.⁵⁸

Despite the diversity in opinions regarding the origin of Jesus' self-appellation, "Son of Man" in Mark 14:62//Matt 26:64//Luke 22:69, for our purposes the most important consideration is what the logion tells us about the timing of the eschatological crisis or *Parousia*. The connection to the imminent *Parousia* and Mark 14:62//Matt 26:64 is that the plural antecedents of ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου are the members of the Sanhedrin that will see the exalted Jesus seated at the right hand of God (cf. Psalm 110:1), presumably, in their lifetimes. However, if we acknowledge the possibility that Jesus and his contemporaries believed in a bodily resurrection (e.g., Job 19:26; cf. Mark 12:18//Matt 22:23//Luke 20:27), another explanation of ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου in Mark 14:62//Matt 26:64 appears. Perhaps Jesus' point is that the Sanhedrin will see the Son of Man physically at the Resurrection and Judgment in the eschaton.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, this passage is often cited as important evidence for those holding the dominant scholarly view of the *Parousia* that Jesus and his immediate successors expected an imminent or immediate eschatological crisis or *Parousia*.

⁵⁶ Vena, *The Parousia*, 176, argues that there are two possible meanings of ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου: (1) a generic self-reference to oneself as a human being, or (2) "an a-historical figure with supernatural and divine characteristics who comes in the clouds of heaven at the end of the age, with great power and glory, and who has control over the heavenly hosts (Mark 13:26-27)."

⁵⁷ Albert Schweitzer and Johannes Weiss argued that Jesus, who was in possession of an apocalyptic self-consciousness, did in fact utter the apocalyptic Son of Man sayings himself. See Dale Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth; Millenarian Prophet* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 34. See also Borg, *Conflict*, 234.

⁵⁸ I. Howard Marshall, "The Son of Man," 3:95.

⁵⁹ Darell Bock, "Jesus as a Blasphemer," in *Who Do My Opponents Say That I Am?* (LNTS 327; ed. Scot McKnight and Joseph B. Modica; London: T & T Clark, 2008), 89-91.

C. The Significance of the Delay of the *Parousia* for the Early Christian Movement according to the Dominant Scholarly View

In the preceding pages, I have summarized evidence that those who hold to the dominant view of the timing of the *Parousia* cite to substantiate their view that Jesus and his immediate successors had no concept of a long period of time before the *Parousia*. I would like to conclude this discussion by making some comments on the significance of the delay of the *Parousia* for the early Christian movement from the perspective of the dominant scholarly view. Kümmel writes:

On the one hand he [Jesus] emphasized this conception of imminence so concretely that he limited it to the lifetime of his hearers' generation; yet on the other hand he only expected a *part* of them to live to experience this eschatological event; so he did not wish to limit its proximity too closely. It is perfectly clear that this prediction of Jesus was not realized and it is therefore impossible to assert that Jesus was not mistaken about this.⁶⁰

As the disciples of Jesus' generation began to age and pass away, the early Christian tradition realized, in Kümmel's words, that it was "impossible" that Jesus "was not mistaken" about the timing of the eschatological crisis. What could be done? Schweitzer put his finger on the solution when he wrote about "the abandonment of eschatology, and progress and completion of the 'de-eschatologizing' of the religion which has been connected with it."⁶¹ The early Christian movement began rationalizing a long and indefinite period of time before the *Parousia* by altering Jesus' sayings and parables and deliberately creating others to support the experienced reality. Some of these alterations include sayings and parables addressing Gentile inclusion in the preaching of the Gospel⁶² and the development of a body of parenesis designed to encourage

⁶⁰ Werner Georg Kümmel, *Promise and Fulfillment* (SBT 23; London: SCM Press, 1957), 149; trans. of *Verheißung und Erfüllung: Untersuchungen zur eschatologischen Verkündigung Jesu* (Zurich, 1945).

⁶¹ Schweitzer, *Quest*, 337.

⁶² Wilson writes: "In fact it is fair to say that scarcely any of the material concerned with the Gentiles stands in isolation; almost all of it is connected in one way or another with the theme of eschatology . . . Jesus did

believers to be “alert and ready” for the unexpected *Parousia*. In Gager’s estimation these efforts to de-eschatologize the early Christian message were so successful that “by the year 150 C.E. not only was Christianity no longer an eschatological community, but, as the reaction to the apocalyptic fervor of Montanism clearly reveals, that it had come to regard eschatological movements as a serious threat.”⁶³

III. A Competing Scholarly View: An Unwelcome but Not Entirely Unexpected Delay of the *Parousia* Motivates the Early Christian Church to Refocus its Message

The alternative to the dominant scholarly viewpoint of the timing of the *Parousia* popularized by Schweitzer is, of course, that Jesus and his successors did acknowledge the possibility of a significant period of time before the end.⁶⁴ However, given all the material in the early Christian writings relating to the eschatological tribulation preceding the *Parousia*, this delay was not welcome since it would prolong the period of trial and testing.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, the early Christian movement sought significance in this period of indefinite length by being obedient to injunctions given by its founders, namely, to be morally prepared for the unknown moment of the *Parousia* in the midst of tribulation⁶⁶ and to include the Gentiles in the preaching

not expect such a mission . . . his eschatological expectations logically disallowed it. Jesus believed that the *Parousia* was imminent, so that there was not room for a historical Gentile mission.” Wilson, *The Gentiles*, 28.

⁶³ Gager, *Kingdom and Community*, 45.

⁶⁴ A third option, that Jesus and his successors embraced and planned for a long period of time before the eschatological crisis doesn’t seem to account for the evidence found in the NT and early Christian writings. It seems that the delay was unwelcome to the early Christian movement (see 1 Clement; 1 Thess 4:13-18; and 2 Pet 3 cited above). To these we could add other evidence as well. For example, Rev 6:10: “They [the martyrs] called out in a loud voice, ‘How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?’” Also, Luke 18:6-8: “And the Lord said, ‘Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?’” All of this evidence suggests that the delay was unwelcome even if anticipated.

⁶⁵ Because of discomfort experienced during the period before the *Parousia*, Jesus consoles the church in his Olivet Discourse: “If the Lord had not cut short those days, no one would survive. But for the sake of the elect, whom he has chosen, he has shortened them” (Mark 13:20).

⁶⁶ H. Ridderbos writes with regard to the moral significance of the unexpected *Parousia*, “This *ignorance with respect to the time* is the motif which comes to the fore again and again in the exhortations to the disciples to be watchful . . . Jesus points out the need for incessant vigilance and unflagging perseverance because of the fact that

of the Gospel.⁶⁷ This competing scholarly view of the timing of the *Parousia* is supported by such scholars like C.E.B. Cranfield,⁶⁸ Herman Ridderbos,⁶⁹ G. R. Beasley-Murray,⁷⁰ A. L. Moore,⁷¹ I. H. Marshall,⁷² and more recently, Timothy Geddert,⁷³ Micheal Bird,⁷⁴ Ben Witherington III, etc.⁷⁵ In general, the competing viewpoint prefers to conceive of the *Parousia* in the sense of a final cataclysmic arrival of the Christ for judgment and vindication instead of an *eschatological crisis* in the sense of the dominant scholarly view.

A. The OT Conception of the Day of Lord as Background to the Competing Scholarly View on the Timing of the *Parousia*

Before I outline the basic components of this competing scholarly viewpoint on the timing of the *Parousia*, it is important to make a few comments regarding its fundamental logic. Basically, the competing scholarly viewpoint argues that Jesus and his immediate successors “considered the imminence of the end possible in their era but not a certainty.”⁷⁶ According to this view, the

we *cannot* know the moment of his coming, which may be sooner or later than we had expected, and may even come suddenly [emphasis his].” Herman Ridderbos, *The Coming of the Kingdom* (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1962), 513.

⁶⁷ J. Thompson writes of about significance of this period: “If in the sequence of events which we find in Mark the Jewish mission precedes the Gentile mission, Mark 13:10 indicates that the Gentile mission is a prerequisite to the end; until the mission is completed the end is delayed (13:7, ἀλλ’ οὐπω τὸ τέλος). The *δεύτερον* implied in Mark 13:10 is the end. Thus the period before the end is given a positive significance. While it is marked by endurance of the Messianic Woes, it is characterized by the fulfillment of the task of evangelizing the nations.” James W. Thompson, “The Gentile Mission as an Eschatological Necessity,” *ResQ* 14 (1971), 26.

⁶⁸ C.E.B. Cranfield, “Thoughts on New Testament Eschatology,” *SJT* 35.6 (1982), 504.

⁶⁹ Ridderbos, *The Coming of the Kingdom*, 513.

⁷⁰ G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1985), 218.

⁷¹ A. L. Moore, *The Parousia in the New Testament* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1966), 191.

⁷² I. H. Marshall, *Eschatology in the Parables* (London: Theological Student’s Fellowship, 1963), 15.

⁷³ Timothy Geddert, *Watchwords, Mark 13 in Markan Eschatology* (JSNTSup 26; ed. David Hill (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 254.

⁷⁴ Bird, *Jesus and the Origins*, 8.

⁷⁵ Witherington III, *Jesus, Paul and the End*, 36.

⁷⁶ Witherington III, *Jesus, Paul and the End*, 19.

timing of the eschatological crisis in the earliest Christian tradition is not characterized by *immediacy* or *imminence*; but rather by *ignorance* and *unexpectedness*.⁷⁷

The explanation for this lies in the faith heritage of Jesus and his successors which taught about the unexpectedness of eschatological events. In terms of eschatology, the overriding image in the OT is the *Day of the Lord* (יְהוָה יוֹם). One of the defining characteristics of the Day of the Lord prophecies is its “nearness” often expressed by the Hebrew adjective קָרֵב.⁷⁸ Given the usage of קָרֵב, it is not always clear whether the nearness is spatial or temporal; however, we can be sure that, at least in many instances, the prophets envision the Day of the Lord as temporally near.⁷⁹

However, in addition to nearness, there is also another perspective. Ladd writes:

The predominating emphasis is upon the uncertainty of the time, in light of which people must always be ready. This is the characteristic perspective of the Old Testament prophets. The Day of the Lord is near (Isaiah 56:1; Zephaniah 1:14; Joel 3:14, Obadiah 15); yet the prophets have a future perspective.⁸⁰

A good example is the text from Hab 2:3 (LXX) which speaks of a delay in the arrival of the Day of the Lord:⁸¹ “For the revelation awaits the appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and not delay [LXX: ὅτι ἐρχόμενος ἥξει καὶ οὐ μὴ χρονίσῃ].”⁸² The appeal to Hab 2:3 in Heb 10:37 attests that it was

⁷⁷ Witherington III, *Jesus, Paul and the End*, 19.

⁷⁸ Within the nineteen *direct* references to the Day of the Lord in the OT, nine speak of the Day as being “near.” See Isa 13:6, 22; Ezek 30:3; Joel 1:15, 3:14; Obad 15; and Zeph 1:7, 1:14. Gerhard von Rad writes of this phrase, “If we survey once more the phraseology of the circle of ideas of the Day of Yahweh, among all the traditionally combined details which we found recurring with a certain regularity in the texts, there is no element which appears so firmly formulated and which echoes so often in these contexts as the exclamation: ‘the Day of Yahweh is at hand!’” Gerhard von Rad, “The Origin of the Concept of the Day of Yahweh,” *JSS* 4 (1959): 107-108.

⁷⁹ Adele Berlin, *Zephaniah* (AB 25a; New York: Doubleday, 1994), 78.

⁸⁰ Ladd, *New Testament Theology*, 210.

⁸¹ For the argument as to why Hab 2:3 refers to the Day of the Lord, see Francis I. Andersen, *Habakkuk* (AB 25; New York: Doubleday, 2001), 205.

⁸² No doubt taking their cue from the LXX version of Hab 2:3, the NT writers use the verb χρονίζω in reference to the delay of the *Parousia*: Matt 24:48/12:45 (“My master delays [χρονίζω]”); Matt 25:5 (“The bridegroom was delayed [χρονίζω]”); and Heb 10:37 (“He who is coming will come and not delay [χρονίζω]”).

influential in the early Christian movement. There are at least two other OT texts referencing the Day of the Lord which suggest that Israel's prophets contemplated the possibility of a prolonged period before the eschatological fulfillment.⁸³ Based on this evidence from the OT, those who hold the competing view on the timing of the *Parousia* claim that Jesus and his immediate successors had every reason to acknowledge the possible delay of the moment of eschatological fulfillment.

B. Futurist versus Realized Eschatology

A final comment regarding the logic of the competing scholarly view of the timing of the *Parousia* must be made with respect to the *concept of time* underlying it. The dominant scholarly view, represented by Schweitzer, is primarily *futurist* in orientation (i.e., it argues that Jesus and his immediate successors looked to the [not-too-distant] *future* for eschatological deliverance). A defining characteristic of the competing view is that it tempers a *futuristic* outlook with a *realized* conception of time. The competing view argues that the events of future, like the *Parousia* and Judgment, are provisionally fulfilled in the first advent, the crucifixion, and the resurrection of Jesus. Thus, in Jesus, the past and the future are held in tension.

While C. H. Dodd was the first to popularize “*realized eschatology*” with his now famous insight on Mark 1:15 (Dodd translated ἦγγικεν as the “Kingdom of God has come” instead of the

⁸³ First, Ezek 12:26-28 (a text closely connected to a Day of the Lord prophecy in 13:1-7) addresses the problem of false prophets predicting that the prophecies would be delayed. Ezekiel responds: “Thus says the LORD God: None of my words will be delayed any longer.” A second Day of the Lord passage which seems to at least contemplate the possibility of a delay is Isa 13:22. This Day of the Lord oracle begins in 13:6 with a generalized prophecy of destruction for sinners (“Wail, for the day of the Lord is near, it will come like destruction from the Almighty”). However, in 13:17, the Day of the Lord oracle specifically addresses Yahweh’s destruction of Babylon. Interestingly, as if anticipating that certain hearers might entertain the question of delay, the end of the oracle reaffirms: “Its time is close at hand and its days will not be prolonged.” Along with these two texts, we should mention Ps 90:4 (“For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night”) though it makes no direct reference to the Day of the Lord. This text made an impression on the early Christian movement since the author of 2 Peter used it in his explanation of the delay of the *Parousia* (2 Pet 3:8: “But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day”). See the final chapter of this study for a discussion of 2 Pet 3.

traditional, “The Kingdom of God is at hand”),⁸⁴ it was Oscar Cullmann who developed this insight into a full-fledged concept of time in his book, *Christus und die Zeit (Christ and Time)*.⁸⁵ Whereas C. H. Dodd focused almost entirely on how Jesus’ ministry is a fulfillment (i.e., a realization) of eschatology,⁸⁶ Cullmann argues that Christ’s advent, death, and resurrection, was for the early Christian movement the definitive moment (“mid-point” or “center-point”) of history and a guarantee of the final victory of the *Parousia*.⁸⁷ Cullmann writes, “That which has already happened [i.e., the crucifixion and resurrection] offers the solid guarantee for that which will take place. *The hope of the final victory is so much more vivid because of the unshakably firm conviction that the battle that decides the victory has already taken place* [emphasis his].”⁸⁸

While Cullmann concluded that Jesus did expect a period of time between the events of Easter and the *Parousia*,⁸⁹ he notes that Jesus’ and his successors’ sense that this time was short was a “psychological phenomenon” borne out of the significance of the eschatological events that had already occurred.⁹⁰ For Cullmann, this intermediate period of an unknown length is not an embarrassment for the early Christian community because the most significant eschatological events have already been realized.⁹¹ Rather, the delay has significance for the mission of the

⁸⁴ Dodd, *The Parables*, 44. Dodd was subsequently criticized for his semantic arguments pertaining to the verb, ἤγγικεν or ἐγγίζω and its Aramaic counterpart, “גשׁ.” See Robert F. Berkey, “ΕΓΓΙΖΕΙΝ ΦΘΑΝΕΙΝ and Realized Eschatology,” *JBL* 82.2 (1963), 181.

⁸⁵ Oscar Cullmann, *Christ in Time, the Primitive Christian Concept of Time and History* (trans. Floyd F. Filson; Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1950); trans. of *Christus und die Zeit* (Zollikon-Zurich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1947).

⁸⁶ Kloppenborg, “As One Unknown,” 12

⁸⁷ Aune, “The Significance of the Delay,” 89, 93.

⁸⁸ Cullmann, *Time*, 87.

⁸⁹ Cullmann, *Time*, 149.

⁹⁰ Cullmann, *Time*, 90.

⁹¹ Aune, “The Significance of the Delay,” 94. Frey, “*New Testament Eschatology*,” 16, summarizes, “Already in his first work Cullmann tried to demonstrate that the views of Early Christianity are fundamentally

church while it awaits the final consummation of its already-achieved victory. Cullmann writes, “This missionary proclamation of the Church, its preaching of the gospel, gives to the period between Christ’s resurrection and *Parousia* its meaning for redemptive history; and it has this meaning through its connection with Christ’s present Lordship.”⁹² Cullmann’s concept of time is a good illustration of the difference between the futurist orientation of the dominant conception of the timing of the *Parousia*, and the second conception, which has both realized and future components in its eschatological orientation.⁹³

While many years have passed since Dodd and Cullmann’s original reflections regarding the “realized” component of NT eschatology, their views remain influential. Jörgen Fry notes that in the modern discussion regarding NT eschatology, both the “futurist” and the “realized” component must be held in tension,

Accordingly, New Testament exegesis also has to distinguish between two ‘lines’ of eschatological expressions or ideas in early Christian texts: first the reference to events, situations or circumstances that were traditionally expected in the future or linked with the end of the individual life or the end of time [i.e., the futurist], and second the idea that at least some of those elements of traditional expectation

shaped by the tension between the ‘Already-now’ and the ‘Not-yet’ and that the underlying view of such an eschatology is the idea of a continuing time-line between past, present, and future.”

⁹² Cullmann, *Time*, 157.

⁹³ Bruce Malina, “Christ in Time: Swiss or Mediterranean?” *CBQ* 51.1 (1989), 29, calls into question Cullmann’s eschatological category of time. According to Malina, Cullmann’s “realized” eschatological perspective (described by the phrase, “already-but-not-yet”) is a foreign concept of time imposed on the biblical authors. Malina writes, “First, in the NT period there was no tension between the ‘now’ and the ‘not yet.’ When those writings were written and collected, there was only emphasis on a rather broad ‘now.’ On the other hand, the ‘not yet’ is a continual concern of persons from future-oriented societies.” While it is certainly fair to reflect on the differences between a modern Western concept of time (such as Cullmann’s) and that of the Ancient Near East (such as that of Jesus and the biblical authors), it is clear (*contra* Malina) that the biblical authors considered the salvation-historical events of Christ to be both present *and* future in a sense that would be recognizable to a modern person. Evidence for my critique can be found in the texts analyzed in Chapter One which show an early Christian community anxiously awaiting yet-to-be-realized apocalyptic events. Indeed the future was important to early Christians despite Malina’s dismissal of future-orientated eschatology, “All of the evidence indicates that NT authors were present-orientated.” Malina, “Christ in Time,” 29. Frey, “*New Testament Eschatology*,” 19, agrees, “A purely ‘presentized’ view without any kind of future-orientation can hardly be found anywhere in antiquity, not even Gnosticism.”

are now made present or fulfilled (in Christ, in the Christian community or in the individual life of the Christian).⁹⁴

Now that I have concluded my comments with respect to the logic of the competing scholarly view, I will analyze some of the important evidence from the early Christian writings that supports it.

C. Evidence in the Early Christian Literature for the Competing Viewpoint on the Timing of the *Parousia*

The competing scholarly viewpoint on the timing of the *Parousia*, that Jesus and his successors did acknowledge the possibility that there could be a significant passage of time before the eschatological crisis (even if they did not welcome it), has a large body of support in the early Christian literature. Before we can comment on the significance of the delay of the *Parousia* from this viewpoint, we need to analyze the evidence suggesting that Jesus and his immediate successors did contemplate the possibility of a prolonged period before the *Parousia*.

Jesus' saying of ignorance about the timing of the *Parousia* in Mark 13:32//Matt 24:36 is the place to start the discussion of the competing viewpoint. The location of Mark 13:32 ("No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father") right after the "generation saying" in 13:30 and before the Parable of the Doorkeeper in 13:33-37 is admittedly confusing. Why would the Markan Jesus, who has just claimed that his *Parousia* will occur in the lifetime of "this generation" (assuming ταῦτα πάντα of v. 30 refer to vv. 24-27), now claim to be ignorant of the timing of his return (along with "the angels in

⁹⁴ Jörg Frey, "New Testament Eschatology—an Introduction," 7-8. Frey offers following evidence to substantiate his claim, "Thus we find the idea of God's kingdom still to come (Lk 11:2) or already arrived, e.g. in Jesus' acts (Lk 11:20), or the idea of resurrection and life to be present in Jesus (Joh 11:25) or expected for 'the last day' (Joh 6:39, 40, 44, 54). In some passages, the two 'lines' of eschatological expression are even presented side by side in one phrase, thus most clearly in John 5:25 (cf. 4:23): 'The hour is coming –and now it is'." Frey, "New Testament Eschatology," 8.

heaven” too)?⁹⁵ Obviously, those who hold the competing viewpoint are compelled to suggest another antecedent to ταῦτα πάντα of v. 30, namely, vv. 5-26 where Jesus discusses the eschatological tribulation. If the antecedent to which ταῦτα πάντα referred is vv. 5-26, then the integrity of Jesus’ declaration of ignorance of the timing of his *Parousia* is maintained. Another question raised by 13:30 is why Jesus would claim ignorance in the first place. Given that it was considered unseemly for Jesus to be ignorant of the timing of his own *Parousia* (as evidenced by the fact that several manuscripts omit “and the Son” from Matt 24:36⁹⁶), the answer is simply that Jesus and his immediate successors in fact *did not know* when the *Parousia* would happen.⁹⁷

If Jesus and his immediate successors were ignorant of the timing of the *Parousia*, then in principle they accepted the possibility that the period between Easter and the *Parousia* could be longer than expected. Following this logic, Timothy Gedder offers a helpful summary of Mark 13:32 and the parable of the Doorkeeper which it introduces,

Its message is not fully summed up either by ‘Look carefully, the end may be closer than you think,’ or by ‘Keep looking unfailingly, the End may be delayed

⁹⁵ If Mark was writing during or near the time of the first Jewish War (when Jesus’ generation had nearly all passed away), then his juxtaposition of 13:30 and 13:32 would be especially incendiary assuming “these things” of 13:30 referred to the *Parousia* in vv. 24-27. Effectively, the Markan Jesus would be saying, “The Son of Man does not know when, in the life of this passing generation, all these signs of the *Parousia* (and indeed the *Parousia* itself) will occur.” Such logic would delimit the *Parousia* to the time between the reception of Mark’s Gospel and the final few years remaining in the lives of Jesus’ elderly generation. However, if 13:30 referred to the eschatological tribulation of vv. 5-23 (including the defilement and destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans in v. 14), then the juxtaposition of 13:30 and 13:32 makes sense. The Markan Jesus would effectively be saying, “While the Son of Man does not know the time of his *Parousia*, during the life of this passing generation a great eschatological tribulation will occur.” Mark’s readers, disturbed by the Jewish War and Emperor Nero’s persecution of Roman Christians (assuming that Mark was writing for the Christian community of Rome during final years of Nero’s rule), would have been encouraged to remain faithful since Jesus himself warned of this painful persecution. However, even if Mark was not writing to Roman Christians, any Christians of the Greco-Roman world would have considered the years of A.D. 65-73 as times of great tribulation since it was during this time the “Mother Church” (i.e., the Church of Jerusalem) was uprooted and scattered. See Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Last Days*, 448.

⁹⁶ The phrase οὐδὲ ὁ υἱός is present in certain manuscripts (ⲛ*.² B D Θ *f*³ *pc* it vg^{mss} Ir^{lat} Hier^{mss}) and absent in the Majority Text and a few others (L W *f*⁴ 33 Ⲙ vg sy co). NA²⁷ adopts the longer reading.

⁹⁷ A. L. Moore, *The Parousia*, 99.

longer than you expect.’ Its message is rather that, whether the interval be short or long, what is required in the meantime is faithful discipleship and mission.⁹⁸

Another example that would lend support to the competing view of the timing of the *Parousia* is the parable of the Persistent Widow (Luke 18:1-8) found only in Luke. This parable appears after a composite collection of eschatological sayings in Luke 17:20-37 which Luke has adopted from Mark 13, Q, and his unique tradition (L). The introduction to the parable of the Persistent Widow speaks of prayer in general (18:1: “Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up”). However, given the preceding context, the complaint about the delay (v. 7: μακροθυμέω) of justice for the elect, the resulting swift response from God (v. 8: ἐν τάχει), and the reference to the *Parousia* of the Son of Man (v. 8: ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἐλθών), it is clear that the prayer in question is for the quick return of Christ to vindicate a persecuted early Christian movement suffering tribulation.⁹⁹ Under the influence of Hans Conzelmann, who has developed the dominant scholarly view on the timing of the *Parousia* into an interpretational framework for Luke-Acts,¹⁰⁰ many argue that this parable shows Lukan theological innovation with regard to the *Parousia*’s delay.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Timothy Geddert, *Watchwords*, 254.

⁹⁹ Moore writes: “As it stands now, this parable speaks not simply of prayer in general (cf. v. 1) but of the prayerful longing of the faithful for the *Parousia* (cf. v8b); if this is the meaning imposed by Luke it is especially significant that he had emphasized *en tachei*.” Moore, *The Parousia*, 163.

¹⁰⁰ Conzelmann, one of the most influential commentators on Luke, used the principle that Jesus and his immediate successors had no conception of the possibility of delay to trace Lukan redaction throughout Luke-Acts. Conzelmann writes, “Luke’s eschatology, when compared with the original conception of the imminence of the Kingdom, is a secondary construction based on certain considerations which with the passage of time cannot be avoided. It is obvious what gives rise to these reflections—the delay of the *Parousia*. The original idea presupposes that what is hoped for is near, which means that the hope cannot be reconciled with delay.” Hans Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke* (trans. Geoffrey Buswell; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1982), 97; trans. of *Die Mitte Der Zeit: Studien Zur Theologie Des Lukas* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1953).

¹⁰¹ Wilson, *The Gentiles*, 73.

The juxtaposition of ἐν τάχει (“quickly” or “soon”¹⁰²) and μακροθυμέω cause a certain amount of dissonance between the concepts of imminence and delay, especially when coupled with the menacing rhetorical question, “However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?” (18:8). For some scholars such as A. L. Moore, this suggests that perhaps the parable of the Persistent Widow is not so heavily redacted because Luke retains the concept of a *possibly imminent Parousia*.¹⁰³ In the end, the parable of the Persistent Widow, like Mark 13:32 and parallels, suggests that the *Parousia*, though later than expected, could occur at any moment. This is the lesson of the unjust judge (18:6-7)--that the prolonged cries for eschatological justice of the elect (cf. Mark 13:20), though seemingly unheeded, are indeed noticed and will precipitate a response from a *just* God. Thus delay and imminence are united in the concept of a *Parousia* occurring at an unexpected moment. Luke 18:1-8 contemplates the possibility of an indefinite period of time punctuated by the *Parousia* of the Son of Man *at an unexpected moment*.

The largest body of evidence in the early Christian literature supporting the competing viewpoint on the timing of the *Parousia* is the “*Watchfulness parenesis*” found in the Synoptic Gospels, Pauline epistles, 2 Peter, and Revelation. The defining characteristic of the Watchfulness parenesis is admonition to be “watchful” and “awake” (utilizing the verbs γρηγορέω and ἀγρυπνέω) in light of the unknown moment of the *Parousia*.¹⁰⁴ The Watchfulness parenesis is found in (1) the parable/simile of the Thief (Matt 24:42-44//Luke 12:39-40; 1 Thess 5:2, 4; 2 Pet 3:10; Rev 3:3; and 16:15); (2) the Gospel sayings on Noah (Matt 24:37-39//Luke

¹⁰² William F. Arndt, et. al., “τάχος,” *BGAD* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 807; trans. of *Griechisch-Deutsches Worterbuch Zu Den Schrift En Des Neuen Testaments Und Der Ubrigen Urchristlichen Literatur* (4th ed. Berlin, 1949). See also Moore, *The Parousia*, 163. Other biblical examples include Rev 1:1 and 22:6.

¹⁰³ Moore, *The Parousia*, 164.

¹⁰⁴ Zachary King, “The Ethical Admonition of Watchfulness and the Timing of the *Parousia*” (Th.M. thesis, Calvin Theological Seminary, 2005).

17:26-27) and Lot (Luke 17:28-29); (3) the parable of the Doorkeeper (Mark 13:34-37//Luke 12:35-38); and (4) the parable of the Virgins (Matt 25:1-13). If Jesus and his earliest successors believed that the *Parousia* could come at an unexpected moment, then the Watchfulness parenesis would be an ideal tool to express this reality since it uses unpredictability to convey practical significance. Instead of disenchantment or disillusionment with the delay, the unexpected moment of the *Parousia* encourages moral preparation and perseverance in eschatological tribulation.

The parable/simile of the Thief (Matt 24:42-44//Luke 12:39-40; 1 Thess 5:2, 4; 2 Pet 3:10; Rev 3:3; and 16:15) is one of the primary sources of the Watchfulness parenesis in the NT and other documents of the early Christian community such as the *Didache*.¹⁰⁵ For the most part, scholars agree that the simile of the Thief goes back to the earliest layers of the Christian movement as it appears in 1 Thessalonians (one of the earliest NT writings) and the “Q” sayings source shared by both Matthew and Luke (see Matt 24:43-44//Luke 12:39-40).¹⁰⁶ Jeremias argues that originally the parable/simile of the Thief referred to “some recently effected burglary, about which the whole village is talking” and Jesus thus employed “the alarming occurrence as a warning of the imminent calamity which he sees approaching.”¹⁰⁷ Later, according to Jeremias, the Thief was applied to the delay of the *Parousia* and finally to early Christians who were encouraged to remain prepared for the *Parousia* of the Son of Man, who came to represent allegorically the Thief.¹⁰⁸ However, Jeremias misunderstands that the basic point of the simile of

¹⁰⁵ Lövestam, *Spiritual Wakefulness*, 102. In fact, five of the six occurrences of the parable/simile of the Thief in the NT also contain the encouragement to be watchful for the unexpected *Parousia*.

¹⁰⁶ C. H. Dodd concludes that the parable/simile of the Thief existed in “as early a stage in the history of the church as it is possible to reach.” Dodd, *Parables*, 168.

¹⁰⁷ Jeremias, *Parables*, 49.

¹⁰⁸ Jeremias, *Parables*, 50.

the Thief is not *imminence* but *unexpectedness*.¹⁰⁹ Thus, John Stott's explanation is preferable, "The trouble with burglars is that they do not tell us when they are coming. They make no advance announcement of their arrival . . . The same unexpectedness will characterize the day of the Lord."¹¹⁰ This concept of unexpectedness is borne out in the texts themselves: (1) Matt 24:42 ("You do not know on what day your Lord will come"); (2) Luke 12:39 ("If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming. "); (3) 1 Thess 5:4 ("But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief"); and (4) Rev 3:3 ("I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come to you"). The connection between the thief and the command to be watchful is as follows: since the arrival of the thief cannot be anticipated, one must be watchful and alert (γρηγορέω and ἀγρυπνέω) for his coming whether the interim period is brief or long. By virtue of its very nature, the parable/simile of the Thief contemplates the possibility of a prolonged passage of time before the *Parousia*, punctuated by the sudden and unexpected arrival of the Son of Man.

Jesus' sayings on Noah (Matt 24:37-39//Luke 17:26-27) and Lot (Luke 17:28-29) are other examples of Watchfulness parenesis that contemplate the possibility of a prolonged (or brief) passage of time before the *Parousia*. In Matthew, Jesus' saying on Noah is bracketed by the ignorance saying (Matt 24:36: "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father") and an admonition to watch (v. 42: "Therefore keep watch [γρηγορέω], because you do not know on what day your Lord will come") which itself is the introduction to Matthew's simile/parable of the Thief. Thus, in Matthew, there is a strong

¹⁰⁹ Plevnik, *Paul and the Parousia*, 105, succinctly observes, "The image 'thief in the night' thus expresses unexpected danger."

¹¹⁰ John Stott, *The Gospel and the End of Time: the Message of 1-2 Thessalonians* (Downer's Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity, 1991), 109.

connection between this parabolic saying on Noah and the Watchfulness paranesis.¹¹¹ Luke, on the other hand, has not directly connected his sayings on Noah in 17:26-29 to the Watchfulness paranesis, though he has further developed the saying on Noah by appealing to the destruction of Sodom and the deliverance of Lot. Despite not making reference to “watchfulness,” it is clear that Luke has in mind the same events as Matthew since he connects the “days of the Son of Man” (ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου) to the days of Noah (ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις Νῶε) in 17:26.¹¹²

Even a brief analysis of these two texts will reveal the intention of the Lukan and Matthean Jesus. Jesus warns that the eschatological crisis provoked by the *Parousia* of the Son of Man will come at an unexpected moment that could be either sooner or later than expected.¹¹³ Those who do not realize the gravity of the hour will be caught unprepared (Matt 24:38: “For in those days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark”).¹¹⁴ By choosing the image of Deluge of Gen 7, Matthew and Luke have suggested that the interim period before the unexpected moment of the *Parousia* could be long in duration. After all, Noah himself had time to build a massive ark which would bear him, his family, and many animals to safety after the revelation of the Flood.¹¹⁵ But, perhaps this delay is exactly the point of the image of Noah. Jeremias writes, “It is the last hour. The Deluge is impending (Matt 24:37-39, cf. 7:24-27), the axe lies at the root of the unfruitful fig-tree. But

¹¹¹ Lövestam, *Spiritual Wakefulness*, 104.

¹¹² Another connection between the Noah saying in Luke and the *Parousia* is the appeal to the phenomena on the day of the Son of Man (ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ αὐτοῦ in 17:24). However, this is a disputed reading and bracketed in NA²⁷.

¹¹³ Davies and Allison conclude, “Our saying goes its own way in focusing neither upon the sins of Noah’s generation nor his righteousness but upon the unexpected nature of the cataclysm that overtook the world while people went about their daily business unawares.” Davies and Allison, *Matthew XIX-XXVIII*, 380.

¹¹⁴ Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 719.

¹¹⁵ The author of 1 Peter suggests that this was indeed a long period of time in 3:20 where he writes: “When God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built.”

God, marvelously suspending the fulfillment of his holy will, has allowed more respite for repentance.”¹¹⁶ The *Parousia* will come at an unexpected moment, which could possibly be longer than hoped for, to allow humankind to prepare for the eschatological crisis.

Another portion of the Watchfulness parenesis that suggests that the *Parousia* could be later (or earlier) than expected is the parable of the Doorkeeper/Waiting Servants (Mark 13:34-37//Luke 12:35-38). While many commentators argue that the parable shows evidence of heavy redaction,¹¹⁷ some hold that, in its basic form, the parable of the Doorkeeper/Waiting Servants is an authentic parable of Jesus.¹¹⁸ However, there is dispute about whether the parable of the Doorkeeper/Waiting Servants is really one parable, or two entirely different parables that bear a coincidental resemblance.¹¹⁹ Some scholars argue that the parable of the Doorkeeper/Waiting Servants is an “archetype” of other parables that refer to an absent master/bridegroom like the parables of the Talents/Pounds, the Virgins, and the Wise and Foolish Servants (Matt 24:45-51).¹²⁰ The Markan version of the parable is a bridge between the preceding Olivet discourse and

¹¹⁶ Jeremias, *Parables*, 169.

¹¹⁷ Dodd writes, “Both [Doorkeeper and Thief parables] were originally intended to refer to a situation already existing, but subject to unexpected developments of any moment. They were both intended to warn the hearers to be prepared for such developments. When the immediate crisis passed, the parables were naturally re-applied to the situation in which the early Christians found themselves after the death of Jesus; and the expectation of the second advent hardened into a dogma.” Dodd, *Parables*, 170.

¹¹⁸ Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Last Days*, 468-469.

¹¹⁹ Outwardly, the two versions of the parable have a number of similarities: (1) the watching/wakeful doorkeeper(s) (Mark 13:34/Luke 12:36); (2) encouragement to watch (γρηγορέω) (Mark 13:37//Luke 12:37); and (3) the reference to the watches of the night (Mark 13:35//Luke 12:38). On the other hand, there are significant differences, especially in Luke 12:35-36a and 37 and in the context of the two parables (the Lukan parable occurs in the midst of the Travel Narrative while the Matthean parable occurs as part of the eschatological discourse). I. H. Marshall argues that there are enough similarities to warrant that these two texts refer to the same parable (though perhaps spoken on two occasions). See I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* (NIGTC; Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1978), 537. Fitzmyer, on the other hand, argues that the two versions are entirely different parables. See Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV* (AB 28b; New York: Doubleday, 1985), 984.

¹²⁰ Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Last Days*, 473.

the upcoming passion narrative (and especially the account of Gethsemane).¹²¹ The fact that the Watchfulness parenthesis figures so importantly in these two versions of the parable shows that the concept of the unexpected *Parousia* of the Son of Man is the key to understanding them.¹²²

For the purposes of our discussion of the competing view of the timing of the *Parousia* (i.e., Jesus and his successors contemplated the possibility of a significant passage of time before the end), the parable of the Doorkeeper/Waiting Servant is very instructive. The admonition to “Keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back” (Mark 13:35) suggests the possibility of delay. Mark and Luke’s appeal to watches of the night is another indication that the *Parousia* could be longer coming than expected. The master’s arrival at night would have been unusual and indicative of some unforeseen delay since travel at night was considered dangerous and normally avoided.¹²³ Further, the fact that Mark (“whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn”) and Luke (“even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night”) refer to the late watches of the night as times that the Master could arrive suggests the possibility of delay.¹²⁴ In Luke, the opening admonition of the parable, “Be dressed ready for service and keep your lamps burning” suggests that the arrival of

¹²¹ The command in Mark 13:33, βλέπετε, connects with the preceding injunctions in the Olivet Discourse to watch out for false prophets and tribulations (Mark 13:2, 5, 9, 23, and 33). The command, γρηγορεῖτε, in v. 35 and 36 connects with the Gethsemane account where Jesus enjoins his disciples to watch in 14:34, 37, and 38. Also, the watches of the night mentioned in 13:35 provide the framework for the passion account which is arranged according to watches. See Troy Martin, “Watch during the Watches,” *JBL* 120.4 (2001), 692.

¹²² In Mark 13:34-37 ἀγρυπνέω/γρηγορέω appear three times in vv. 33, 34, 35, and 37; in Luke 12:35-40 γρηγορέω appears in v. 37.

¹²³ Marshall, *Luke*, 537. Alternatively, the nocturnal imagery of the *Parousia* can also be explained by the early church’s use of darkness as a metaphor for the present age and light for the messianic age (e.g., Rom 13:11-14).

¹²⁴ For this reason, many commentators argue that the appeal to watches of night (Mark 13:35//Luke 12:38) came from the early Christian community and not from the mouth of Jesus because, according to the dominant view of the timing of the *Parousia*, Jesus had expected an imminent or immediate *Parousia*.

the master is much later than expected, allowing for the possibility that an unprepared servant may be undressed for the night and with an extinguished lamp (cf. Matt 25:7).¹²⁵

We should note the strange reference to the master's table service in the Lukan parable of Waiting Servants as well (12:37). It would have been extremely unexpected for a master, who is just returning from a wedding banquet, to dress himself to serve and wait on the servants late in the night.¹²⁶ However, this strange verse is a veiled reference to the Messianic banquet after the *Parousia* which likely originates from Luke's special tradition and reinforces the concepts of service expounded in 22:24-30.¹²⁷

The parable of the Doorkeeper/Waiting Servants is a good example of how the Watchfulness parenthesis allows for the possibility that the *Parousia* of the Son of Man could happen later than expected. While the concept of unexpectedness certainly allows for an earlier-than-expected arrival of the eschatological crisis, our analysis of some details in the parable of the Doorkeeper/Waiting Servants suggests that an unexpected delay could be the more likely of the two possibilities.

The final text containing a reference to the Watchfulness parenthesis that suggests a delayed *Parousia* is the parable of the Virgins. We already mentioned that according to those who hold the dominant view of the timing of the *Parousia* (i.e., that Jesus and his earliest successors did not reckon with an indeterminate period of time before the *Parousia*), the parable of the Virgins is regarded as a "crisis parable" that was heavily redacted by Matthew to account

¹²⁵ Marshall, *Luke*, 534.

¹²⁶ Luke 17:7-10 better reflects what first century masters and mistresses expected of their slaves. In this parable the master directs his slave to prepare him supper after completing the field work. Only after the master has finished dining would the slave be allowed to eat. Luke concludes this parable: "So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.'"

¹²⁷ Paul Deterding, "Eschatological and Eucharistic Motifs in Luke 12:35-40," *ConJ* 5.3 (May 1979), 92. The reference to the master's table service alludes to Jesus' Eucharistic saying in Luke 22:27: "For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at the table? But I am among you as one who serves."

for the ever-lengthening period of time before the *Parousia*.¹²⁸ Without a doubt there is evidence of redaction in the parable of the Virgins: (1) the disagreement between the exhortation of the concluding verse (25:13: “Be awake [γρηγορεῖτε], therefore”) and the behavior of the wise virgins (25:5: “They all fell asleep”); (2) the unusually cruel judgment described by the “Q” saying in 25:11-12 (par. Luke 13:25-26);¹²⁹ and (3) the unusual delay of the bridegroom for his banquet. As we mentioned above, Vicky Balabanski, taking her cue from Puig i Tàrrach,¹³⁰ argues that 25:5-7a are allegorical additions to the oral tradition of the parable which attempt to shed light on the problem of the death of believers before the return of Christ (cf. 1 Thess 4:13-18).¹³¹

Despite this clear evidence of Matthean redaction, we can safely assert that with regards to its major point, the parable of the Virgins does not depart from the bounds set by the Watchfulness parenesis in particular or Jesus’ claims to be ignorant of the hour of his *Parousia* in general. The point of the Watchfulness parenesis is that Jesus could come earlier *or* later than expected. However, the parable of the Virgins strongly and clearly introduces the theme of delay (v. 5: χρονίζοντος δὲ τοῦ νυμφίου) which was only hinted at in some of the other texts we have studied. Also, the fact that both the wise and the foolish virgins “fall asleep” (καθεύδω) suggests that it is not *only* a culpable lack of preparation for the *Parousia* that is in view (cf. 1 Thess 5:6-7); but also the death of members of the early Christian community (cf. 1 Thess 5:10) who

¹²⁸ See Kümmel, *Promise and Fulfillment*, 57.

¹²⁹ The saying in Matt 25:11-12 appears in the Lukan parable of the Narrow Door (13:24-27): “Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, ‘Sir, open the door for us.’ But he will answer, ‘I don’t know you or where you come from.’”

¹³⁰ A. Puig i Tàrrach, “La Parabole des dix vierges,” in *AnBib*102 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1983): 165-193.

¹³¹ Balabanski, *Eschatology in the Making*, 24-54. According to Balabanski, the delay (χρονίζω) of the bridegroom is the delay of the *Parousia*, the falling asleep (καθεύδω) of the virgins represents death, the midnight cry to meet (ἀπάντησις) the bridegroom represents the *Parousia* (cf. ἀπάντησις in 1 Thess 4:17), and the rising (ἐγείρωμαι) of the virgins represents the Resurrection.

believed that they would live to see the *Parousia*. Thus, it is not merely the suggestion of an unexpected *Parousia*, but rather the very real possibility of a delay that occasions the parable of the Virgins.¹³² In this way, the message of the Ten Virgins echoes the suggestion made in the parable of the Talents in 25:14-30 that the master could be delayed (e.g., v. 17: μετὰ δὲ πολλὸν χρόνον). Regardless of the provenance of expressions like Matt 25:5, the main point of the parable of the Virgins (which is inherent in the concept of watchfulness) with regard to the *Parousia*'s timing is the sense of unexpectedness. The parable of the Virgins provides solid support for the competing scholarly view of the timing of the *Parousia*, that Jesus and his immediate successors reckoned with the possibility of delay, even if they did not welcome the stress that it would occasion for the early Christian community.

D. The Significance of the Delay of the *Parousia* for the Early Christian Movement according to the Competing Scholarly View

Now that we have finished presenting the evidence for the competing viewpoint on the timing of the *Parousia*, we may ask the question, “What significance does this concept of the *Parousia*'s timing have for our understanding of the early Christian movement as it faced the reality of delay?” Or, to put the question another way, if Jesus and his earliest successors indeed contemplated the possibility of an indeterminate time period between the events of Easter and the *Parousia*, what significance did this fact have for the early Christian movement when it was confronted by the delay?

We saw that when confronted by the delay according to the dominant scholarly view, the early Christian movement fell into a profound crisis which could only be resolved by a

¹³² Dan Via writes, “There was a delay, an extension of time, which they [the virgins] were not expecting and for which they were not prepared. The message . . . seems to be: Be prepared for a wait, but do not let the delay lull you into thinking that you will not have to acquit yourself in action at a moments’ notice.” D. O. Via, “Ethical Responsibility and Human Wholeness in Matthew 25:31-46,” *HTR* 80 (1987): 86; quoted in Davies and Allison, *Matthew XIX-XXVIII*, 398.

programmatic “de-eschatologization” of the early Christian parenesis to account for the delay. This was not the case according to those who hold the competing view of the timing of the *Parousia*. Vicky Balabanski captures this idea:

It is a most intriguing fact that the delay of Jesus' *Parousia* did not represent much more of a crisis for the first Christians than actually was the case. Though doubtless the earliest community was confronted by a serious problem in the non-fulfillment of their expectation of an imminent end, nevertheless it cannot be denied that the community survived the delay of the *Parousia* without a substantial break. The question as to how the first Christians came to terms with the delay of the end of the world and the *Parousia* without bitter disappointment and without sacrificing their eschatological hope still requires careful historical and theological consideration.¹³³

According to the competing scholarly view of the timing of the *Parousia*, the *Parousia* was *delayed* only in that its fulfillment would occur *later than hoped*.¹³⁴ Unlike the dominant view, the experience of delay caused no *global* crisis in the early Christian movement for the following reasons. First, the imminent *Parousia* was considered only a possibility (along with delay) or an insignificant aspect of the teaching.¹³⁵ Second, like the Jewish eschatology which preceded it (see the discussion of the Day of the Lord above),¹³⁶ tension between the imminence and delay in *Parousia* is a defining characteristic of the early Christian movement's eschatology.¹³⁷ Thus, the early Christian movement, though undoubtedly disappointed by the non-arrival of the

¹³³ Balabanski, *Eschatology in the Making*, 1.

¹³⁴ I am using *delay of the Parousia* as a term denoting the *psychological* and *emotional* experience of the early Christian community which hoped for an imminent *Parousia* as shown in texts such as 1 Thess 4-5 and 2 Pet 3 (see the note on terms in the preface). Strictly speaking, according to the competing view of the *Parousia*'s timing, this long interim period is not a “delay” since it was always possible that the *Parousia*'s arrival could be sooner *or later* than expected. Existentially, however, the interim period was experienced as a delay regardless of theological considerations.

¹³⁵ Aune argues: “The infrequency with which the problem [of delay] comes to the surface may be taken to indicate how generally unimportant the matter actually was.” Aune, “The Significance,” 100-101.

¹³⁶ Richard Bauckham, “The Delay of the *Parousia*,” *TynBul* 31 (1980), 9.

¹³⁷ A. Oepke writes, “The tension between imminence and delay in the expectation of the end is characteristic of the entire biblical eschatology.” Albrecht Oepke, “Der Herrnspruch über die Kirche Mt 16, 17-19,” *ST* 2 (1950): 145; quoted in George E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (rev. ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 210.

eschatological Son of Man in the later decades of the first century, was not unprepared. Third, since the early Christian movement gave no explicit date for the *Parousia* (unlike so many other apocalyptic movements), it was not difficult to push such expectation to a later time-period.¹³⁸ Finally, Jesus and his earliest successors such as Paul and the Evangelists had prepared the early Christian movement to find significance in the delay of the *Parousia* since “the instructions he [Jesus] gave them for living in and evangelizing society presuppose a significant interval of time before the end of the age would come, during which they could put this teaching into practice.”¹³⁹ While not everyone that holds to the competing view of the *Parousia*’s timing would accept all four of these above-mentioned reasons, they do explain why the early Christian movement, though no doubt troubled by the delay, was not cast into a crisis which resulted in the reformulating of its eschatology to account for reality.

The key to the significance of the delay according to the competing scholarly view on the timing of the *Parousia* is encapsulated in the concepts of *moral endurance* and *mission*. These concepts, which were at least embryonically present in the teachings of Jesus and his earliest successors, became foci of reorientation for the eschatological message of the early Christian movement. Such a reorientation did not reject the possibility of an imminent *Parousia* even in the movement’s later writings in which phrases like ἐν τάχει (Luke 18:8; Rev 1:1; and 22:6) still appear prominently.

The concept of moral endurance comes to expression in the Watchfulness parenesis which Rudolf Schnackenburg helpfully summarizes,

There springs an eschatological attitude which does not push aside the final events that are to come to the fringe of the believer’s mind, but on the contrary views them, in prospect and as approaching, as perpetual summons to vigilance and

¹³⁸ Aune, “The Significance of the Delay,” 100-101.

¹³⁹ Blomberg, *The Parables*, 88-89.

sobriety, to responsible action in the world, to combat and struggle against the destructive powers of evil and to a living hope and joyful confidence.¹⁴⁰

A good example of the moral significance of the period between the events of Easter and the *Parousia* is the Apostle Paul's instruction in Rom 13:11-14 where, using the language of the Watchfulness parenthesis, he admonishes his audience to "wake up" in "view of the present time" and "put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light" with the understanding that "the night is nearly over; the day is almost here."¹⁴¹ Thus, we see that one important point of significance for the competing view on the timing of the *Parousia* is that the delay provided an opportunity for the early Christian movement to focus on moral preparation and perseverance in the period preceding the *Parousia*.

However, as we will see in the remainder of this study, there arose another significant focus as a result of the experience of the *Parousia's* delay: mission, or the transmission of the fundamental message of the early Christian community to those outside it. At first, mission was focused particularly on the "lost sheep of Israel" as we saw in Matt 10:23. In contrast, "mission" in the sense commonly used today (i.e., Matthew's mission the *Gentile nations*) was the eventual fruition of the early Christian community's allowance to include Gentiles in its life and message.¹⁴² Mission is often, though not always, cited as a point of significance for the delay according to those who hold the competing viewpoint on the timing of the *Parousia*. The concept of mission during the period between Easter and the *Parousia* provided significance for this

¹⁴⁰ Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Moral Teaching of the New Testament* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 195.

¹⁴¹ Lövestam explains Paul's exhortation this way: "Primarily, it does not refer to mental alertness and watchfulness. The admonition to 'keep awake' means exhortation to the Christians not to let themselves be spiritually stupefied and choked by absorption in the present age of night, but to realize their position as sons of light and sons of the day, living in such a way as agrees with the day to come and being thus ready for the *Parousia* of the Lord." Lövestam, *Spiritual Wakefulness*, 58.

¹⁴² In this present study I prefer to use the term, "Gentile inclusion" instead of "Gentile mission" wherever possible since the latter presupposes a well-developed theology and rationale for an activity which would have normally been counter-intuitive for first century Jews.

epoch which could otherwise have been merely a discouragement.¹⁴³ Oscar Cullmann writes, “*This missionary proclamation of the Church, its preaching of the gospel, gives to the period between Christ’s resurrection and Parousia its meaning for redemptive history; and it has this meaning through its connection with Christ’s present Lordship* [italics his].”¹⁴⁴ For those who hold that Jesus and his earliest successors at least contemplated the possibility of an indeterminate period of time before the *Parousia*, the experience of delay had great significance for the early Christian movement. It called Christians to redouble their efforts to be morally pure in the time of temptation and tribulation (i.e., the πειρασμός of 1 Pet 3:12). It also encouraged them to engage in mission until the end of the age (i.e., Matt 28:20) when the Son of Man would return.

As we conclude our discussion of the two scholarly views of the timing of the *Parousia*, we must note that there are not always clear differences between them and complete uniformity within them. What can be said for those that hold to the dominant scholarly view, that Jesus and his immediate successors had no concept of a delay, is that the early Christian movement faced a profound crisis of faith because of the *Parousia*’s delay, requiring a rewriting of its traditions to fill the void of failed expectations. In order to fill this void and resolve the unsatisfied expectations, the early Christian movement attributed sayings to Jesus implying an indefinite period of time before the eschaton to be used for the gainful activities of mission and moral endurance.¹⁴⁵ On the other hand, for those who hold the competing scholarly view, that Jesus and his immediate successors reckoned with the possibility of delay, the early Christian

¹⁴³ Moore, *The Parousia*, 96-97.

¹⁴⁴ Cullmann, *Christ in Time*, 157.

¹⁴⁵ Gager, *Kingdom and Community*, 45-46.

movement merely refocused itself and appropriated pre-existing concepts like moral endurance and mission to give meaning to the time period before the *Parousia*.

IV. The Perspective of This Study: Gentile Inclusion as an Explanation for Delay of the *Parousia* (Mark 13:10//Matt 24:14; Matt 28:16-20; Luke 24:45-49; Acts 1:7-8; and Mark 14:9//Matt 26:13)

The goal of this study is to show how three literary motifs present in the parables--growth, the wedding feast, and the absent master--express the delay of the *Parousia* as a reason for Gentile inclusion in the Christian community. In order to argue this thesis, I have found it necessary to show the significance of the delay of the *Parousia* for the early Christian movement according to two scholarly views of the *Parousia*'s timing. Based on the evidence summarized above in my explanation of the two scholarly viewpoints, I will presuppose in the rest of this study that the early Christian movement sincerely hoped for an imminent *Parousia* but made provision for its delay by viewing the timing of the end as fundamentally *unexpected* or *unknown*. As time passed after Easter, the early Christian movement was confronted with two realities: the *unwelcome* but *ongoing* passage of time and the astonishing reality of growing Gentile interest in the teaching of Jesus and the communities formed around it. At some point in the first century, the early Christian movement made a theological connection between these two—i.e., it began to understand Gentile inclusion as an explanation for the delay of the *Parousia*.

Now, by way of background, we will briefly analyze several dominical sayings which show just such a connection between Gentile inclusion and delay, but which do not make up the parabolic material that I will address in depth later. In a sense, the material contained in these sayings is the *prose* logic to the art of the *parables* in uniting the concepts delay and Gentile inclusion.

Before looking at the texts themselves, it should be noted that eschatological hope (in our case, the hope for an imminent *Parousia* held by the early Christian movement) does not, in and of itself, lead to an effort to include others in a religious community. In fact, just the opposite can happen.¹⁴⁶ Instead, “expectation of the end often leads to an isolationist or quietist stance toward the outside world.”¹⁴⁷ However, the delay of the *Parousia* created another philosophy with regard to inclusiveness. The disappointment caused by the delay of the *Parousia* mobilized the early Christians to seek meaning through the inclusion of people unlike themselves within their communities. In the words of Martin Goodman:

As the end was continually postponed, they [the early Christians] reacted to the failure of reality to live up to expectations by seeking new adherents to their group: the fact that the newcomers wished to join them confirmed them in their beliefs despite the objective fact that what they thought would happen had not come to pass. Missionary outreach was thus an antidote to doubt and uncertainty. Success in winning converts brought reassurance.¹⁴⁸

The texts below show that the early Christian movement sought out and found significance in the delay of the *Parousia* through the effort to include the Gentiles in the message and life of the Christian community.

A. Mark 13:10//Matt 24:14¹⁴⁹

Mark 13:10//Matt 24:14 is strong evidence that the early Christian movement had begun to understand the delay of the *Parousia* as a reason for inclusion of Gentiles only several decades

¹⁴⁶ For example, the monastic Jewish community of Qumran, though anxiously awaiting an apocalyptic vindication of itself as the truly faithful over and against Second Temple Judaism, showed absolutely no desire to include Gentiles in its communities. Wilson, *The Gentiles*, 2.

¹⁴⁷ Martin Goodman, *Mission and Conversion, Proselytizing in the Religious History of the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), 163-164.

¹⁴⁸ Goodman, *Mission and Conversion*, 166-167.

¹⁴⁹ Luke 21:24 is probably not a parallel to Mark 13:10//Matt 24:14. Hahn writes: “For Mark’s reference to the world-wide preaching of the gospel there is here substituted the probably pre-Lucan remark about the times of the Gentiles being fulfilled (21.24).” Ferdinand Hahn, *Mission in the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1965), 128.

after the death of Christ. For the most part, commentators on Mark see it as an insertion based on the way it disrupts the flow of 13:9 and 13:11 and also because it contains distinctive Markan vocabulary.¹⁵⁰ However, it is possible that Mark 13:10 is a saying of Jesus taken from another context and inserted in the Olivet Discourse.¹⁵¹ A brief analysis will show that the four shared terms κηρύσσω, εὐαγγέλιον, ἔθνος, and μαρτύριον (though μαρτύριον is connected with the preceding verse in Mark) present in both Matthew and Mark are evidence of significant verbal agreement between the two versions.¹⁵² Furthermore, Mark and Matthew are in agreement as to the placement of this saying.¹⁵³ The primary differences between the saying as it appears in the two books are (1) Matthew's qualification of the Gospel ("Gospel of the Kingdom" in Matthew instead of Mark's "Gospel"); (2) the recipients of the preaching ("to all humankind" in Matthew instead of "to all the nations" in Mark); and the timing of the end ("and then the end will come" in Matthew versus "first" in Mark). Mark uses the verb of divine necessity, δεῖ ("it is necessary") while Matthew connects the noun μαρτύριον directly with the nations instead of the presumably Gentile kings and governors of Mark 13:9.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁰ Bird, *Jesus and the Origins of Gentile Mission*, 168.

¹⁵¹ Kümmel, *Promise and Fulfillment*, 84.

¹⁵² Kilpatrick argues that the phrase καὶ εἰς πάντα τὰ ἔθνη in 13:10a should be read with εἰς μαρτύριον αὐτοῖς in 13:9c. Thus, 13:9c-13:10a would read: "as a witness to them [the kings and governors in 13:9b] and to all nations." As a result, 13:10b would read, "First, it is necessary for the Gospel to be preached." According to this suggestion, the Gospel preaching would have no connection to the nations. See G. D. Kilpatrick, "The Gentile Mission in Mark and Mark 13:9-11," in *Studies in the Gospels: Essays in Memory of R.H. Lightfoot* (ed. Dennis E. Nineham; Oxford: Blackwell, 1967), 147-149. Despite marshaling some inconclusive manuscript evidence, many commentators reject Kilpatrick's proposal because "it would leave the mandate to preach the gospel in verse 10 unqualified and pointless." William Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 461-462.

¹⁵³ The saying is placed between the command, "Watch out that no one deceives you" (Matt 24:4//Mark 13:5) and the "abomination" saying in Matt 24:15//Mark 13:14. The material between these bracketing verses addresses persecution, false prophets, apostasy, wars, famines and earthquakes.

¹⁵⁴ Craig Evans notes that "governors" probably refers to the Roman authorities, though "kings" could refer to the Herodians. Craig Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20* (WBC 34b; Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 309-310.

Mark 13:10	[v. 9: εἰς μαρτύριον αὐτοῖς.] καὶ εἰς πάντα τὰ ἔθνη πρῶτον δεῖ κηρυχθῆναι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον.
Matt 24:14	καὶ κηρυχθήσεται τοῦτο τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ οἰκουμένῃ εἰς μαρτύριον πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, καὶ τότε ἔξει τὸ τέλος.

The saying in Mark and Matthew raises several questions regarding the connection between the delay of the *Parousia* and Gentile inclusion. First, some have questioned whether Mark saw the early Christian community as doing the preaching at all. Jeremias popularized the concept that Mark 13:10 refers to an angelic announcement of the Gospel at the end of times when the Lord gathers in the Gentile nations (cf. Rev 14:6: “Then I saw another angel flying in midair, and he had the eternal gospel to proclaim to those who live on the earth—to every nation, tribe, language and people”).¹⁵⁵ There is little evidence that Mark understood the subject of the preaching (κηρύσσω) to be anyone other than the early Christian community.¹⁵⁶

A second issue raised in connection with Gentile inclusion and the delay of the *Parousia* is the adverb, πρῶτον. Πρῶτον, which refers back to ἀλλ’ οὐπω τὸ τέλος (“but not yet the end”) in v. 7, indicates that the preaching of the Gospel to the nations must occur *before* the end.¹⁵⁷ Therefore, πρῶτον effectively delays the *Parousia* in 13:24-27 until Gentile inclusion has run in course.¹⁵⁸ Matthew’s parallel phrase, καὶ τότε ἔξει τὸ τέλος, functions similarly. The *end*, again referring to the *Parousia* in Matt 24:29-31, does not arrive until the “Gospel of the Kingdom” is

¹⁵⁵ Joachim Jeremias, *Jesus’ Promise to the Nations* (London: SCM Press, 1958), 23.

¹⁵⁶ See Davies and Allison, *Matthew XIX-XXVIII*, 344. Jeremias would like “angels” to be the subject of the “preaching” in Mark 13:10 as this would support his thesis that the primary understanding of mission for Jesus and his earliest successors was that of an “eschatological pilgrimage” in which all the nations come to Israel at the behest of the Lord. See Jeremias *Jesus’ Promise*, 69.

¹⁵⁷ See Thompson, “The Gentile Mission,” 22-23.

¹⁵⁸ Vena, *The Parousia*, 258, deduces, “The Markan idea ‘but the end is still to come’ appears as a ‘de-apocalyptizing [sic],’ element since according to the evangelist certain things must happen prior to the end. Among these, the preaching of the gospel to all nations occupies an important place (13:10).”

preached “in the whole world as a testimony to all nations.”¹⁵⁹ Some commentators have suggested that the qualification “to the nations” and “in the whole world” could have even been fulfilled by A.D. 60 in view of Paul’s missionary wanderings in the Roman Empire.¹⁶⁰ However, this presupposes a very narrow understanding of geography on the part of the first century people of the Roman Empire who would have at least known of the existence of territory as far flung as Britain, India, the steppes of Central Asia, and the Upper Nile (regions which would not be touched by the Gospel for centuries to come).¹⁶¹ Thus in Mark and Matthew, the *Parousia* is delayed until the Gentile nations are included in the preaching of the Gospel.

A third issue raised in Mark 13:10/Matt 24:14 with respect to Gentile inclusion and delay is Mark’s use of the verb, δεῖ. In Mark and other early Christian writings, δεῖ indicates a “divine eschatological necessity.”¹⁶² Δεῖ signifies that a particular event is part of God’s inalterable and unfathomable eschatological plan (e.g., Mark 9:11). Thus, the use of δεῖ in Mark 13:10 shows that the delay of the *Parousia* to allow for Gentile inclusion is part of the unalterable divine eschatological plan and therefore must happen.¹⁶³ For the early Christian community, Gentile inclusion during the period before the *Parousia* is not optional according to Mark 13:10/Matt 24:14. It is a divinely-ordained necessity.

B. Mark 14:9/Matt 26:13

Another text in which the delay of the *Parousia* is an occasion for Gentile inclusion is Mark 14:9/Matt 26:13. Cadoux notes that this verse, which is the conclusion of the story of Jesus’

¹⁵⁹ Hahn, *Mission in the New Testament*, 127.

¹⁶⁰ Lane, *Mark*, 463.

¹⁶¹ Kümmel writes, “The saying therefore by no means expresses a necessary decision that the whole of mankind must have heard the gospel before the end can come; but it is stated unambiguously that by then the preaching of the gospel must have penetrated to all the people known at that time.” Kümmel, *Promise and Fulfillment*, 84.

¹⁶² Thompson, *The Gentile Mission*, 22-23.

¹⁶³ Thompson, *The Gentile Mission*, 23.

anointing at Bethany, must be “at least in its present form, historically dubious” because of the reference to a Gentile mission several decades before that mission was in full force and because it presupposes a significant interval before the eschatological appearance of Christ.¹⁶⁴ However, other commentators take issue with the rejection of such sayings based on these criteria.¹⁶⁵

With regard to the saying and its context in their respective Gospels, Matthew and Mark are more or less in complete agreement. There are only insignificant differences such as the use of a demonstrative adjective τοῦτο in Matthew to clarify the meaning of τὸ εὐαγγέλιον (i.e., *this Gospel*).

Mark 14:9	ἀμὴν δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν, ὅπου ἐὰν κηρυχθῇ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον εἰς ὅλον τὸν κόσμον, καὶ ὃ ἐποίησεν αὕτη λαληθήσεται εἰς μνημόσυνον αὐτῆς.
Matt 26:13	ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ὅπου ἐὰν κηρυχθῇ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦτο ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ κόσμῳ, λαληθήσεται καὶ ὃ ἐποίησεν αὕτη εἰς μνημόσυνον αὐτῆς.

The saying, which shares many similarities with Mark 13:10//Matt 24:14, does not directly appeal to the delay of the *Parousia*. Nevertheless, a delay is clearly in view given the time needed for the proclamation of the Gospel and the act of this unnamed woman which was forever associated with it. Lane writes, “Jesus’ word clearly reckons with a period between his death and the *Parousia* during which the evangelical tradition would be openly proclaimed.”¹⁶⁶ Also, the appeal to ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ κόσμῳ (“in the entire world” in Matthew) and εἰς ὅλον τὸν κόσμον (“to the

¹⁶⁴ Cecil John Cadoux, *The Historical Mission of Jesus Christ* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1943), 158.

¹⁶⁵ Eckhard Schnabel writes of Mark 13:10 and 14:9 that the dismissal of sayings referring to Gentile inclusion “is dependent on the assumption of Jesus’ expectation of an imminent end and linked with an attitude which deems it impossible to reckon with genuine prophecy. If we do not doubt the latter, and if we proceed from the assumption, which can be defended from the evidence in the Gospels, that Jesus assumed an interval between his death and resurrection and the *Parousia*, the statement may be understood as a prophetic commission by Jesus of mission to the Gentiles.” Eckhard Schnabel, “Jesus and the Beginnings of the Mission to the Gentiles,” in *Jesus of Nazareth: Lord and Christ, Essays on the Historical Jesus and New Testament Christology* (ed. Joel B. Green and Max Turner; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans: 1994), 56.

¹⁶⁶ Lane, *Mark*, 494-495.

whole world” in Mark) show that Gentiles are indeed in the view of this eschatological preaching. Thus, Jesus’ saying in Mark 14:9//Matt 26:13 is evidence that the early Christian movement found significance in the time period before the *Parousia* as an opportunity for Gentile inclusion.

C. Matt 28:16-20

Matthew 28:16-20, the well-known passage often referred to as the “Great Commission,” is of critical importance to our understanding of the delay of the *Parousia* as a reason for Gentile inclusion in the early Christian movement. Peter Stuhlmacher writes: “The end of the Gospel of Matthew is a fascinating text. It is not just ‘the key’ to the Gospel of Matthew but also is of eminent importance for the understanding of the mission to the Gentiles (in the period) between the Exaltation and *Parousia* (Second Coming) of Jesus Christ.”¹⁶⁷

Since Matt 28:16-20 does not have direct parallels in the other Gospels, little can be derived from a comparative analysis. However, many exegetes have noted that from a certain point of view, Matt 28:16-20 bears some resemblance to other accounts of “commissioning” such as Mark 16:14-20; Luke 24:36-49; John 20:19-23; and *Did.* 7:1.¹⁶⁸ It is possible that the resemblance points back to an original “commissioning” tradition that has been adapted by the Gospel writers for the literary aim of explaining Gentile inclusion.¹⁶⁹ Several similarities in the

¹⁶⁷ Peter Stuhlmacher, “Matt 28:16-20 and the Course of Mission in the Apostolic and Post-Apostolic Age,” in *The Mission of the Early Church to the Jews and Gentiles* (ed. Jostein Ådna and Hans Kvalbein; Tübingen: Mohr Seibeck, 2000), 17.

¹⁶⁸ Davies and Allison, *Matthew XIX-XVIII*, 676-677.

¹⁶⁹ Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 881. See also Ernst Best, “The Revelation to Evangelize the Gentiles,” *JTS* 35 (1984), 2, “Because of the parallels in Luke, Acts, and John we assume that Matthew knew a tradition about the risen Lord relating a commission to disciples to spread the Gospel.” Hahn agrees: “The actual command to missionize among the Gentiles may be old—there is no need whatever to doubt, in view of the importance of prophecy in the whole of early Christianity, that it was a matter of genuine revelation and commissioning by the Lord.” Hahn, *Mission in the New Testament*, 63.

five commissioning accounts support this claim.¹⁷⁰ First, all five of the above-mentioned commissions occur after Easter and are vocalized by the risen Jesus as opposed to the other commission to go to the “lost sheep of Israel” located during Jesus’ Galilean ministry (Matt 10:1-42 par. Mark 6:7-13//Luke 9:1-6). Second, instead of merely advocating preaching to Israel (i.e., Matt 10:5-6), these commissioning accounts refer to active incorporation of Gentiles in the early Christian community.¹⁷¹ Thus, if a shared tradition exists behind the commissioning accounts, its key components include an appearance of the resurrected Christ and a command to begin a Gentile-focused mission.¹⁷²

Regardless of whether a commissioning account existed in a shared tradition, Matthew’s version reflects his own theological considerations. Therefore, it is likely that much of its language was adapted from other sayings and traditions (e.g., the tripartite baptismal formula) and molded into the form of commissioning given on the Galilean mountainside.¹⁷³

In fact, the text of 28:16-20 has been fashioned by Matthew himself into a climatic conclusion reiterating the themes of the entire Gospel, especially Gentile inclusion.¹⁷⁴ For this

¹⁷⁰ Best, “The Revelation to Evangelize the Gentiles,” 6, summarizes this evidence.

¹⁷¹ John Harvey, “Mission in Matthew,” in *Mission in the New Testament, an Evangelical Approach* (ed. William Larkin Jr. and Joel Williams; Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1998), 47, writes, “This universalistic scope is, in fact, the most consistent element running through the five commissioning accounts. The scope of their mission is expressed in various ways, but in each account Jesus expanded the disciples’ mission far beyond ‘the lost sheep of the house of Israel.’ It is no longer a particular mission, receiving non-Jews who seek assistance; it is now a universal mission, actively carrying the good news to Jew and Gentile alike.”

¹⁷² See John P. Meier, “Two Disputed Questions in Matt 28:16-20,” *JBL* 96.3 (1977), 416. Based on his literary and theological assessment of Matthew, Meier expands his assessment of the shared tradition to include a rendezvous on a Galilean mountain, a statement concerning Christ’s exaltation, the command to baptize, and a promise of divine support for the Gentile mission.

¹⁷³ Hahn, *Mission in the New Testament*, 63.

¹⁷⁴ Stuhlmacher compellingly makes this argument, “If one analyzes the text [Matt 28:16-20] diachronically and synchronically at the same time, the picture changes and it becomes clear that Matthew has taken a very old Jewish-Christian tradition and worked it out as the programmatic conclusion of his Gospel.” Stuhlmacher, “Matthew 18:16-20 and the Course of Mission,” 42-43. Hagner agrees that 28:16-20 is the climatic conclusion to the entire Gospel, “These final five verses not only conclude the passion-resurrection narrative of chaps. 26-28 but also serve as the conclusion to the entire Gospel.” Donald Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 881.

reason, it is not surprising to see the phrase πάντα τὰ ἔθνη in 28:19, which also appears on Jesus' lips in Matt 24:14. This phrase, which logically connects with a number of OT texts concerning the nations (see Isa 56:7 LXX [πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν]; Ps 66:3 LXX [πᾶσιν ἔθνεσιν]; Ps 71:11 LXX [πάντα τὰ ἔθνη]; Ps 116:1 LXX [πάντα τὰ ἔθνη]; etc.), forms an important theme in Matthew.¹⁷⁵ Likely, the very influential text from Dan 7:13-14 where "one like a son of man" is given authority over "all peoples and tribes" (cf. Matt 28:18) lies behind Matthew's commissioning of the disciples here as well.¹⁷⁶ Matthew's placement of the Great Commission on a Galilean mountain echoes the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai (where YHWH also claims to be with his people in Exodus 20:2 much like Matt 20:20) and therefore also Matthew's Sermon on the Mount (5:1).¹⁷⁷ Schnabel summarizes how Matthew has shaped 28:16-20 to focus on Gentile inclusion, "The Great Commission is the last and therefore perhaps the most relevant definition of the λαός whom Jesus will save according to the announcement of the angel (1:21)—the identification of "his people" as people of the nations is the resolution of a theme that has been implied (2:1-12), predicted (8:11-12), and clarified (15:21-28) earlier in the Gospel."¹⁷⁸

In addition to the Matthean character of 28:16-20, the text presents some other important issues in regard to the themes of delay and Gentile inclusion. One obvious issue is the significance of the phrase in 28:20, καὶ ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ μεθ' ὑμῶν εἰμι πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας ἕως τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος ("And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age"). Given the immense size of the endeavor, it is manifestly obvious that the proclamation of the Gospel to *all* the nations suggests a very long passage of time before the *Parousia*. Moreover, the phrase

¹⁷⁵ Thompson, "The Gentile Mission," 22-23.

¹⁷⁶ Davies and Allison, *Matthew XIX-XXVIII*, 684.

¹⁷⁷ Walter Vogels, *God's Universal Covenant* (St. Paul: Saint Paul University, 1979), 141.

¹⁷⁸ Schnabel, *Jesus and the Beginning of Mission*, 45.

ἕως τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος straightforwardly implies an indeterminate age of considerable length. Thus, the αἰών or “age” is an eschatological era preceding the *Parousia* which will continue until the end of all days (πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας) when the Gospel has been preached to all nations. With regard to the significance of this period of delay in 28:20, Cullmann writes: “This is not a vague chronological statement like ‘always’ (as we usually interpret it), but it is a clear reference to the eschatological character of the missionary enterprise, which must take place precisely in this form, before the end of the age, and itself gives meaning to this age.”¹⁷⁹ In the phrase, ἕως τῆς συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος, Matthew connects the delay of the *Parousia* with Gentile inclusion, showing the early Christian community that the time period after the events of Easter had great significance.

Another issue Matt 28:16-20 raises with respect to delay and Gentile inclusion is the concept of the “two eras”: (1) the time before Easter when Jesus and his disciples were entirely preoccupied with preaching to their fellow Jews and (2) the post-Easter era where Jesus and his disciples show proactive concern for the Gentiles. Matthew 28:16-20 (and the other commissioning accounts) is the pivot point for this fundamental shift.¹⁸⁰ John Harvey summarizes the issue well:

With the recognition of Jesus’ exalted status also comes a new *scope* for the disciples’ mission. Now they are to carry their witness to “all the nations” (Matthew 28:19; Luke 24:47; cf. Mark 16:15). This universalistic scope is, in fact, the most consistent element running through the five commissioning accounts. The scope of their mission is expressed in various ways, but in each account Jesus expanded the disciples’ mission far beyond “the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” It is no longer a particular mission, receiving non-Jews who seek assistance; it is

¹⁷⁹ Oscar Cullmann, “Eschatology and Missions in the New Testament,” in *The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology* (ed. W. D. Davies and D. Daube; Cambridge: The University Press, 1956), 417.

¹⁸⁰ Jeremias writes: “Similarly, the principle that the hour of the Gentiles can only come after the Cross and the Resurrection underlies the missionary commission of Matthew 28:18-20 . . . Hence the implication of Matthew 28:18-20 is that with the death and resurrection of Jesus the eschatological hour has arrived. God no longer limits his saving grace to Israel, but turns in mercy to the whole Gentile world. Henceforth the eschatological people of God are to announce to all nations that they too belong to the kingdom of the Son of Man.” Jeremias, *Promise*, 38.

now a universal mission, actively carrying the good news to Jew and Gentile alike.¹⁸¹

It is as if, according to many key figures in the early Christian movement (including Matthew as evidenced by 28:16-20), the Resurrection marked a new epoch where the time between Easter and the final consummation was reserved for mission characterized by an openness to those who had been mostly excluded from Israel.¹⁸² In Chapter Two we will make a few comments about the relationship between the Jewish and Gentile missions, so we will not discuss them here.¹⁸³ Nevertheless, we must note that the “two-era” or *heilsgeschichtlich*¹⁸⁴ concept of mission noted above is an important development in the Matthean and Lukan theology connecting the *Parousia*’s delay to the phenomenon of Gentile inclusion. While the mission to the Jews certainly continued in the early Christian community,¹⁸⁵ the era inaugurated by the events of Easter evidenced a new openness to Gentile inclusion in the time leading up to the *Parousia*.¹⁸⁶ Thus, in 28:16-20 Matthew utilizes a “two-era” framework to support the concept of the delay as a reason for Gentile inclusion.

D. Luke 24:45-49

¹⁸¹ Harvey, “Mission in Matthew,” 47.

¹⁸² C. K. Barrett writes, “Along with the passages cited he gives (28:19) the commission to make disciples of *panta ta ethne* (‘all the nations’) and appears to understand the restrictive commands as applying to the time of the ministry of Jesus, the universal commission to the post-resurrection interval. The Gentile mission thus appears as a piece of ‘realized eschatology’ belonging to the period between the resurrection and *Parousia*.” Charles K. Barrett, “The Gentile Mission as an Eschatological Phenomenon,” in *Eschatology and the New Testament: Essays in Honor of George Raymond Beasley-Murray* (ed. W. Hulitt Gloer; Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1988), 70.

¹⁸³ It should suffice to say that many scholars do not see a rigid distinction between the missions to the Jews and Gentile inclusion. The mission to the Jews prepares for Gentile inclusion and continues right through the period of Gentile mission inaugurated by texts like Matt 28:16-20. For example, Hahn argues, “Here the pattern of ‘First—then’, such as we know in Mark and Luke, will not do at all. In Matthew each of the two missions, Jewish and Gentile involves the other . . . For Matthew it is, so to say, a question of two concentric circles which necessarily belong together, and what he wants to assert in his own way is the priority of the mission to Israel and the permanent obligation towards it—for without Israel as the centre there would indeed be no salvation.” Hahn, *Mission in the New Testament*, 127.

¹⁸⁴ See Wilson, *The Gentiles*, 24-25.

¹⁸⁵ See Blomberg, *Parables*, 108.

¹⁸⁶ Barrett, “The Gentile Mission,” 70.

The commissioning account found in 24:45-49 is another text which can shed light on the early Christian view of the delay of the *Parousia* as a reason for Gentile inclusion. The Lucan commissioning comes at the end of Jesus' post-resurrection appearance to the disciples as they were discussing the events that "two of them" (Luke 24:13) had experienced on the road to Emmaus. The risen Jesus appears to all of the disciples in order to prove his resurrection to those doubting (cf. Matt 28:17: "some doubted") and to open their minds to the Scriptures (24:45) in the same way as he had done with the two on the road to Emmaus (24:27).

While this text is somewhat similar to the commissioning accounts in Matthew (28:16-20) and the Markan appendix (Mark 16:15-16), the Lukan account in these verses shows the unique hand of its author.¹⁸⁷ Whereas Matthew emphasized the making of disciples (μαθητεύω), Luke emphasizes repentance (μετάνοια) and forgiveness (ἄφεσις), which are two important concepts in the Third Gospel. In addition, the phrase ἀρξάμενοι ἀπὸ Ἰερουσαλήμ (beginning in Jerusalem) foreshadows the commission of Acts 1:8-9 where the witnessing will be "in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Furthermore, the phrase, "what my Father promised," has special significance for the theology of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts and will be mentioned again in Acts 1:4 ("On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: 'Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about'"). Also, there is the introduction of the concept of testimony in 24:48, which "will be picked up in the programmatic verse of Acts (1:8) and used often thereafter."¹⁸⁸ Despite these unique characteristics, Fitzmyer notes that "Luke has inherited from

¹⁸⁷ Joseph Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV* (AB 28b; New York: Doubleday, 1985), 1578.

¹⁸⁸ Darrel Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 1941.

the ‘L’ tradition [i.e., the special Lukan source] about a final commission of the disciples by the risen Christ, a tradition known to Matthew and the author of the Markan appendix.”¹⁸⁹

Luke 24:45-49 is significant with regard to concept of the delay of the *Parousia* as a reason for the inclusion of Gentiles. At first glance, there is no direct connection with the timing of the *Parousia*. Some scholars would argue that this is deliberate since, according to some, Luke has as a goal to resolve the problem of the delayed *Parousia* which was pressing for him as the generation of Jesus’ first successors faded away.¹⁹⁰ For this reason, Luke places this reference to Gentile inclusion (which does not exclude Israel since it starts *in Jerusalem*) in the post-resurrection narrative instead of the Olivet Discourse as Matthew and Mark have done.¹⁹¹ But the concept of delay is not absent from Luke 24:45-49. First, there is the reference to the preaching of repentance for forgiveness of sins *beginning* (ἄρχομαι) in Jerusalem. Luke-Acts begins in Galilee (during the ministry of Jesus), focuses on Jerusalem (the object of the Lukan “Travel-Narrative” and the events of the Passion narrative), and goes from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).¹⁹² The inauguration of the preaching in Jerusalem (24:47) implies that there is no short period of time ahead. The disciples’ question (Acts 1:6: “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”) before the second commissioning account in Acts 1:7-8 indicates the strong connection between inclusion of the Gentiles and the delay of the *Parousia*.

¹⁸⁹ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, 1580.

¹⁹⁰ Stephan Wilson argues that Luke has lifted the concept of Gentile mission out of its eschatological context and placed it in the context of *Heilsgeschichte* where the Gentile mission becomes evidence of fulfillment of God’s promises. This allows Luke to handle the two realities he confronted writing in the second half of the first century: “the delay of the *Parousia* and the Gentile mission of the Church.” Wilson, *The Gentiles*, 54.

¹⁹¹ Wilson, *The Gentiles*, 47. If there is a parallel in Luke for Mark 13:10//Matt 24:14, it would be Luke 21:24 (“Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled”). This reference to the destruction of the Jerusalem does not refer to Gentile inclusion. However, like Mark 13:10, it indicates that a period of time before the *Parousia* is provided for the Gentiles. See Hahn, *Mission*, 128 and Glasson, *Second Advent*, 78.

¹⁹² Fitzmyer, *Luke X-XXIV*, 1581.

With regard to Gentile inclusion itself, Luke is clear in 24:45-49 that all nations (εἰς πάντα τὰ ἔθνη) would benefit from the preaching. As we will see in Acts 2:5-12, this includes Jews “from every nation under heaven” gathered in Jerusalem for the festival of Pentecost. But the preaching will also include the predominantly Gentile inhabitants of those nations from which the Jews in Acts 2 came. Bock writes, “The gospel message in Jesus’ name knows no national or racial barriers. This message is no longer a Jewish message and hope; it is intended for all.”¹⁹³ The fact that Gentiles are included in the preaching is no coincidence or historical accident. For Luke, Gentile inclusion happens according to “what has been written” (24:46) in the Scriptures. Luke has compellingly coupled the concepts of Gentile inclusion and the delay of the *Parousia* in Luke 24:45-49.

E. Acts 1:6-8

Foreshadowed in Luke 24:45-49, the second commissioning account in Luke-Acts, Acts 1:6-8, makes direct and unmistakable connections between the delay of the *Parousia* and Gentile inclusion.¹⁹⁴ Luke reminds us in Acts 1:4-5¹⁹⁵ of the command given by the risen Christ in Luke 24:49 (“I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high”). However, in Acts 1:5, Luke specifies exactly what power Jesus’ Father had promised the disciples, the baptism of the Holy Spirit.¹⁹⁶ As we will see

¹⁹³ Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1940.

¹⁹⁴ Ben Witherington compellingly argues that these accounts shouldn’t necessarily be understood as two accounts of the same commissioning in which “variations” must be accounted for. Rather, the two accounts function as literary devices to close (Luke 24:45-49) and open (Acts 1:6-8) their respective portions of the Luke-Acts narrative. Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles, a Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 107.

¹⁹⁵ “On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: ‘Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about.’”

¹⁹⁶ For the importance of the Holy Spirit in Luke, see 1:35 (Mary’s conception of Jesus by the Spirit); 1:41 (Elizabeth’s experience after Mary’s greeting); 1:67 (Zechariah’s prophecy of Jesus under the power of the Spirit); 2:25-27 (Simeon’s prophecy regarding the boy Jesus); 3:16 (John’s prophecy of one coming who will baptize with “the Holy Spirit and fire”); 3:22 (Jesus’ baptism); 4:1, 14 (Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness); 4:18 (Jesus’

below, the manifestation of the Holy Spirit is a significant eschatological event.¹⁹⁷ It comes as no surprise that the reference to the Holy Spirit precedes the question in 1:6 that introduces the second commissioning account, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?” Like the question that occasioned of the Olivet Discourse (Mark 13:4: “Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?”), the question of Acts 1:6 implies the expectation of fulfillment of the disciples’ eschatological hopes. The disciples are hoping for “the restoration of self-rule to Israel, perhaps even of the theocratic kingship once enjoyed by Israel of old, and certainly of the elimination of the occupying power of the Romans.”¹⁹⁸ However, the response that disciples receive from Jesus is not the one expected. Instead, Jesus speaks of an indeterminate period of time before the *Parousia* (see Acts 1:11) which will be dedicated to mission and the inclusion of the Gentiles.

Three things stand out in this passage with regard to the concept of the delay of the *Parousia* as a reason for Gentile inclusion. First, it is significant that Acts 1:6-8 serves as a corrective for those who held an imminent *Parousia* and vindication for Israel. The resurrected Jesus’ saying in 1:6 is not the only example of Luke’s attempt to cool expectations for the *Parousia*. In the introduction to the parable of the Minas, Jesus is compelled to tell a story of a master on a long voyage to those who “thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once” (Luke 19:11). Like 19:11, Jesus tries in 1:6-8 to correct the disciples’ expectations of an imminent *Parousia* by suggesting that the ongoing present has a definite significance. Wolter writes, “In

quotation of Isa 61:1 in the Nazareth synagogue); 10:21 (Jesus’ response to the report of The Seventy-Two); 12:10 (the blasphemy “against the Holy Spirit”), 12 (Jesus’ direction for his disciples not to be concerned with what to say before the authorities).

¹⁹⁷ Ferdinand Hahn writes, “The continued preaching of Jesus’ message was based on the fact of his resurrection as an anticipation of the events of the End, and on the consequent confirmation of Jesus’ message and of his commission to the disciples. But to this was added the essential driving force and dynamic element of the bestowal of the Spirit, which was likewise understood as a phenomenon of the last days.” Hahn, *Mission*, 50.

¹⁹⁸ Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles* (AB 31; New York: Doubleday, 1998), 201.

both texts, Jesus' response leaves this substantive aspect peculiarly in *abeyance* . . . Instead, discussion turns to the understanding of the interim period until the return, that is, until Jesus' own *Parousia* or until the χρόνοι and καιροί have been fulfilled as stipulated by the Father (Acts 1:7)."¹⁹⁹ As we have already seen, not even Jesus himself knows the time of his *Parousia* (see Mark 13:32//Matt 24:36). But the point of Jesus' remark is not simply that the disciples cannot know the times and dates regarding the *Parousia* and the resulting vindication of Israel. On the contrary, the disciples are called to understand that a new time has been inaugurated in which the focus is on the Spirit-empowered mission given in 1:7-8.²⁰⁰

The second thing that stands out with regard to delay and the inclusion of the Gentiles is the Holy Spirit identified in 1:5 and 7. In the framework of Lucan theology, the manifestation of the Holy Spirit is the defining characteristic of the period before the *Parousia*, a period of mission and the inclusion of the Gentiles.²⁰¹ In fact, it is the Holy Spirit that supports the mission during this interim period. Regarding Acts 1:7, A. L. Moore writes, "The Spirit stamps the present as the grace period in which men [*sic*] are given occasion to repent and believe. For it is the Spirit who sustains the mission of the church—indeed he inaugurated it."²⁰² The fact that Jesus' ascension precedes the manifestation of the Spirit shows that during the period of delay, the Risen Lord will be in heaven and the Holy Spirit on earth, fortifying the church for a mission to

¹⁹⁹ Michael Wolter, "Israel's Future and the Delay of the *Parousia*, According to Luke" in *Jesus and the Heritage of Israel* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1999), 314.

²⁰⁰ Cullmann writes, "There the Risen One, when questioned by his disciples, rejects all questions concerning the 'When' of the Kingdom of God . . . This, however, the disciples should know, that until the Kingdom comes they must carry on the mission . . . The period between the resurrection and the unknown date of the return must be occupied with missionary preaching 'from Jerusalem unto the end of the earth.'" Cullmann, *Christ in Time*, 162.

²⁰¹ Wilson, *The Gentile Mission*, 56-57.

²⁰² Moore, *The Parousia*, 213.

the Gentiles (and Jews who would repent).²⁰³ The manifestation of the Holy Spirit connects the themes of delay and Gentile inclusion in Acts.

A final thing that stands out with regard to delay and the inclusion of the Gentiles in Acts 1:6-8 is the commission for the disciples to be “witnesses” (μάρτυρες) in Jerusalem (cf. Luke 24:47-48), in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (ἐν τε Ἱερουσαλὴμ καὶ πάσῃ τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ καὶ Σαμαρείᾳ καὶ ἕως ἐσχάτου τῆς γῆς). What is the meaning of this geographical phrase in 1:8? One argument is that ἕως ἐσχάτου τῆς γῆς alludes to a verse from the Psalms of Solomon (8:15: ἀπ’ ἐσχάτου τῆς γῆς) where Pompey is spoken of as coming “from the ends of the earth” (i.e., Rome). Thus, the scope of the witnessing would be Jerusalem, all Judea and Samaria and even to Rome itself.²⁰⁴ However, it is better to see the geographical locations cited in 1:8 simply as a *synecdoche* referring to “everywhere beginning in Jerusalem.”²⁰⁵ Furthermore, the fact that 1:8 doesn’t directly mention Gentile inclusion probably means that Luke understood that the Gospel would be preached to both to the Jews of the diaspora and Gentiles in these places.²⁰⁶ Whatever the case, it is clear from the development of Acts that Luke has Gentile inclusion in mind with the geographical description alluding to the Gentile countries in 1:8. How else could he conceive of this phrase in 1:8 when his main character, who refers to himself as the “Apostle to the Gentiles,” argues at the conclusion of Acts that “God’s salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen” (Acts 28:28)? Like the first commissioning in Luke 24:45-49, the commissioning of Acts 1:6-8 shows a strong connection between the delay of the *Parousia* and the inclusion of the Gentiles in the early Christian movement.

²⁰³ Wilson, *The Gentile Mission*, 80

²⁰⁴ Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 206. Supposedly, this argument explains why Luke ends his Gospel with Paul under arrest in Rome.

²⁰⁵ It stretches the imagination to suppose that Luke saw the “farthest reaches of the world” to be the capital of the Roman Empire which considered itself to be at the center of the world.

²⁰⁶ Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 111.

V. Conclusion: The Delay of the *Parousia*'s Contribution to Gentile Inclusion in the Early Christian Movement

Regardless of whether one holds to the dominant scholarly view that Jesus and his earliest successors had no concept of delay or to the competing view that Jesus and his earliest successors accepted the possibility of delay, the texts we have analyzed above point toward a literary connection between Gentile inclusion and the ever-lengthening period of time after Easter. The portions of early Christian literature that we have analyzed witness to a preoccupation with the delay of the *Parousia*. *1 Clem.* 23:4, *2 Pet* 3:3-4, and *1 Thess* 4:13-18 show that it was an occasion for serious eschatological reflection and reorientation. To these, we could add all of the sayings and parables that contain the delay motif mentioned in the foregoing discussion. Though the ever-lengthening time interval between Easter and the *Parousia* was not entirely unexpected, a literary analysis shows that it did cause disappointment among many early Christians longing for eschatological deliverance and therefore required some explanation as to its significance. Proponents of the dominant scholarly view on the *Parousia*'s timing argue that the delay produced a "crisis" resulting in the "de-eschatologization" of the early Christian literature.²⁰⁷ In contrast, based on the literature discussed above, we argue that the *significance* of the delay of the *Parousia* is that it forced the early Christian movement to re-examine its traditions and "discover" the purpose of the time-period (i.e., the delay) before the eschatological consummation. The early Christian movement's discovery was not simply that the indefinite period before the *Parousia* was a time of moral preparation and endurance as we find in the Watchfulness paranesis.²⁰⁸ The early Christian movement discovered that the delay was a divinely appointed occasion to incorporate Gentiles living in the remotest reaches of the known

²⁰⁷ See Gager, *Kingdom and Community*, 45.

²⁰⁸ Plavnick, *Paul and the Parousia*, 111, observes that the disciplines of vigilance and sobriety are in fact "modes of eschatological existence."

world into its communities of faith. In the coming chapters, we will see how the themes of growth, the absent master, and the wedding feast were used by the early Christian community in the parables to express the delay of the *Parousia* as an opportunity for Gentile inclusion.

However, before we can do that, we need to examine other factors that had a bearing on the connection made between the inclusion of Gentiles in the early Christian movement and the *Parousia's* delay. Based on biblical and extra-biblical literature we will examine, we will see that the openness to Gentile inclusion in the early Jewish-Christian community was a complex development. Several other factors pushed the early Christian movement in the direction of Gentile inclusion as it reflected on the significance of the delay. One such factor existed in both the faith traditions and socio-political milieu of first century Judaism itself. In the next chapter, we will see that there existed a sense of “ambivalence” to the Gentiles in first century Judaism that made it possible for the early Christian movement to consider admitting Gentiles. In the end, that ambivalence was skewed towards its positive side by the theological influence of Jewish scripture, first century socio-political events, and the influences of extraordinary first century figures such as Jesus and the Apostle Paul, making it possible for the early Christian community to connect the delay of the *Parousia* with Gentile inclusion.

CHAPTER TWO

AMBIVALENCE TOWARD GENTILES AND GENTILE INCLUSION IN THE EARLY CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT

In Chapter One, we argued that the delay of the Parousia was one significant challenge that motivated the early Christian movement to consider including Gentiles within its communities of faith. However, the delay of the Parousia by itself is an essential but inadequate explanation of the phenomenon of Gentile inclusion. In Chapter Two, we will show that another factor also pushed the early Christian movement to include Gentiles. That factor is the profoundly ambivalent attitude of first century Jewish movements toward the Gentiles. To state it succinctly, first century Judaism had no single answer the question, “What do we do with the Gentiles?”

Because of the diversity of Judaism¹ and because of the tumultuous socio-political environment of the first century, there were a variety of responses to the question of the relationship between Jews and Gentiles. At times during the first century, and in certain quarters, Jews attempted to befriend and influence Gentiles and Gentile political authorities for both religious and pragmatic purposes. At other times, Jews took up arms against the Gentiles (and vice versa) until one or the other was utterly decimated or driven away. At all times and places (including the Diaspora), there was a significant cultural and religious divide between Jews and

¹ Daniel C. Harlow, “Early Judaism and Early Christianity,” in *Early Judaism: A Comprehensive Overview* (ed. John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 392, notes, “Any attempt to discuss the relation between early Christianity and early Judaism must confront two main difficulties. The first is the sheer variety that characterized both of them, a variety so pronounced that some scholars prefer to speak of ‘Judaisms’ and ‘Christianities.’ Nothing like an official or normative Judaism existed in the earliest centuries of the Common Era; it was probably not until the fourth century or later that the rabbinic movement could lay serious claim to be the dominant form of Judaism.” John J. Collins, “Early Judaism in Modern Scholarship,” in *Early Judaism: A Comprehensive Overview* (ed. John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 7-8, outlines two possible responses to the question of the unity and diversity of Judaism in the first century. On one hand, it is possible to place “the emphasis on what all (or at least most) Jews had in common” despite a great diversity within the different expressions of Judaism. This viewpoint is championed by E.P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief* (London: SCM Press, 1992), 47. Collins offers a second option, that of Neusner, who understands first century Judaism as so diverse that it is better to speak rather of “Judaisms” during this period. Jacob Neusner, *Early Rabbinic Judaism; Historical Studies in Religion, Literature and Art* (SJLA; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975), 139-152, writes about the destruction of the modern scholarly concept of “normative Judaism” in the first centuries after Christ due to the diversity in Jewish literature and thought during this time period. According to Neusner, the concept of “normative Judaism” had arisen from fallacious efforts to connect the Judaism of the Talmud to the diverse expressions of Judaism in the first and early second centuries. Neusner, *Early Rabbinic Judaism*, 139.

Gentiles which was occasionally traversed. Like the delay of the *Parousia*, this profound ambivalence toward the Gentiles comes to expression in the literary motifs of growth, absent master, and wedding feast that we will analyze in subsequent chapters. Definitions and explanations for the significant terms that we will use in this chapter may be found in the preface of this study.

I. Introduction: Ambivalence to the Gentiles as a Barrier and Opportunity for Gentile Inclusion

If the OT has anything to say about the identity of God's special covenant people, it is that they are to be a holy people (גוי קדוש), set apart from the nations, just as YHWH their God is holy (Exod 19:6; Lev 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7, 26; cf. Matt 5:48). And yet, YHWH is the creator of all the earth and the master of all who live in it (Ps 24:1). These two declarations, and a myriad like them, sow the fundamental seeds of the ambivalence toward Gentile inclusion in first century Judaism of which the early Christian movement was a part. For first century Judaism, YHWH was both the Lord of Israel and God over all the Gentile nations, whether they acknowledged him or not.

To put it simply, first century Judaism was profoundly ambivalent about the place of the Gentile nations within the covenant people of God. Shaye Cohen well summarizes the Jewish attitude toward Gentile inclusion in the first century:

Between the 'us' of Judaism and the 'them' of polytheism was a boundary that separated the holy from the profane. The precise contours of this boundary were never very clear, but one of the characteristic themes of Jewish thought throughout the ages is this sense of contrast between 'us' and 'them,' between Jew and gentile, between the ideas of Judaism and the ideas of the gentile world (whether polytheism, Christianity, or Islam).²

² Shaye J. D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah* (2nd ed.; Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 27. Interestingly, because of their fundamental convictions and shared practices, many Greco-Roman writers seemed to regard Jews, with exception of certain groups like the Samaritans and Essenes, as a monolithic group. See Louis Feldman, *Judaism and Hellenism Reconsidered* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 45-46.

And yet influential first century Jews realized that it was both necessary, and from a certain theological standpoint, praiseworthy, to share the beliefs of Judaism with Gentile seekers.³ As a necessity, the practice of openness allowed Jewish groups to win over influential patrons whom the Jewish community could call upon to save them from disaster or defend them from their enemies.⁴ As a praiseworthy effort, Jewish apologists like Philo of Alexandria felt that the superior moral (i.e., the *Torah*) and theological (i.e., monotheism) convictions of Judaism were attractive to the pagan Hellenistic world and afforded Jews substantial influence.⁵ In fact, under this influence, a whole new class of Gentiles began to appear in the synagogue, the “God-fearers” who appear in Acts and Josephus’ *Antiquities* (see discussion below).⁶

And yet, as Cohen points out, “From 587 BCE, the destruction of the first temple and the exile to Babylonia, until 1948 CE, the establishment of the modern state of Israel, the Jews of both the diaspora and the land of Israel lived almost exclusively under foreign domination.”⁷ This domination, though sometimes peaceful, could turn savagely violent, and especially from the latter half of the first century to the first half of the second, resulted in great destruction and socio-religious upheaval for Jewish populations. In the end, the ambivalent attitude of first

³ Rainer Riesner, “A Pre-Christian Jewish Mission?” in *The Mission of the Early Church to the Jews and Gentiles* (ed. Jostein Ådna and Hans Kvalbein; Tübingen: Mohr Seibeck, 2000), 237-241.

⁴ For example, the story of Queen Helen of Adiabene, a convert to Judaism, who provided the starving city of Jerusalem with corn and figs according to Josephus’ *Ant.*, 20:49-53.

⁵ Riesner, “A Pre-Christian Jewish Mission?,” 240-241. Philo of Alexandria (*Moses* 2.25-43) confirms this supposition when he writes about how Ptolemy Philadelphus took an interest in the Mosaic Law and had it translated into the Greek version of Scripture that we call the Septuagint. About the Jewish Scriptures Philo writes, “But when, from the daily and uninterrupted respect shown to them [the Jewish Scriptures] by those to whom they had been given, and from their ceaseless observance of their ordinances, other nations also obtained an understanding of them, their reputation spread over all lands; for what was really good, even though it may through envy be overshadowed for a short time, still in time shines again through the intrinsic excellence of its nature.” We might expect some “poetic license” on the part of Philo given his apologetic intent. In contrast, Collins writes that the Jewish Scriptures (LXX) largely “were ignored” by Hellenistic society. John J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 6.

⁶ See Josephus, *Ant.*, 14.110.

⁷ Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, 19.

century Judaism, which neither embraced nor completely rejected the Gentile world, provided an impetus for a theological revolution within a small Palestinian sect. This sect, the early Christian movement, would build a theology of inclusion based on the positive pole of first century Judaism's feelings of ambivalence toward the Gentile world (although the negative pole would occasion great controversies such as those recorded between Paul and the "Judaizers").⁸ This theology of Gentile inclusion is an essential characteristic of the literary motifs of growth, absent master and wedding feast that we will be analyzing later. The goals of Chapter Two are (1) to demonstrate the reality of first century Judaism's ambivalence to Gentile inclusion, (2) show its roots in older and contemporary literature such as the OT and Jewish writings from the Second Temple period, and (3) trace its effects on the early Christian movement.

II. First Century Judaism and the Gentiles

There are two realities to be observed with respect to Judaism and Gentiles in the first century. First of all, Jews formed a large and influential minority in many places throughout the Greco-Roman world.⁹ Second, though conversant in Greco-Roman society, the Jewish people, whether living in the Diaspora or in Palestine, conserved some measure of religious and social uniqueness within the Hellenistic world because of their literature and heritage.¹⁰ David Flusser writes: "Already in Second Temple times, no later than the early second century B.C.E., there existed a robust Jewish worldview. The worldview in question encompassed all the sages, of

⁸ The early Christian movement's theology of inclusion was by no means uniform as there were serious disagreements about the *terms* of that inclusion (e.g., whether adherence to the Torah should be the basis of that inclusion or whether there was another, more fundamental, basis). Paul's discussion in Gal 1-2 is evidence of this debate.

⁹ Lietaert Peerbolte, *Paul the Missionary*, 19.

¹⁰ Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, 6. Martin Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem, the Clash of Ancient Civilizations* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 132, notes that the Jews were not the only people group to conserve their uniqueness: "The contrast with the survival of Jewish literature from late antiquity should not be taken as evidence that other provincials clung on to their distinctive cultural identities less fiercely than did the Jews."

course, but also the Essenes of the Qumran community, the apocrypha, messianic and apocalyptic views, and the early Jewish mysticism.”¹¹ This “uniqueness” was already well-established by the first century based on what we learn from late additions to the Hebrew canon such as the account of Ezra 9-10 where the foreign wives of Jews were expelled from the assembly of Israel. The “uniqueness” of first century Judaism was precisely the cause of its ambivalence toward the Gentile world and of the Gentile world toward it.¹²

A. Gentile Ambivalence toward First Century Judaism

We have ample evidence of the ambivalence of the Hellenistic world toward first century Judaism. A half millennium had passed since the Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian deportation of many Jewish exiles to Mesopotamia, and centers of Jewish culture and civilization were well established throughout the East (Babylonia, Persia, etc.). Under Greek influence, Jewish communities existed in the western areas (Egypt, Asia Minor, etc.) within the Hellenistic world.¹³ For generations, Gentiles had been interacting with the Jewish communities and there were some bumps along the way. For much of the rule of the Ptolemaic and Seleucid Greeks in the Near East, Jews were allowed to live among pagans according to their own customs and laws.¹⁴ However, not all Jews were happy with Hellenism and this led eventually to the violent clash between the forces of the Jewish Maccabees and the Seleucid dynasty during the rule of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. By the beginning of the first century, the Jews in the Diaspora and in

¹¹ David Flusser, *Judaism of the Second Temple Period* (2 vols.; trans. Azzan Yadin; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 2.218; trans. of *Yahadut Bayit Sheni* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Magnes Press and Yad Izhak Ben-Zvi Press, 2002).

¹² Mariam Pucci Ben Zeev, “Jews among Greeks and Romans,” in *Early Judaism, a Comprehensive Overview* (ed. John C. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 367.

¹³ Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, 3-4.

¹⁴ Ben Zeev, “Jews among Greeks,” 371.

Palestine were securely under the rule of Rome, but still desiring a measure of religious freedom which they were granted to great extent by their Roman overlords.¹⁵

But all was not well with the relationship between the two.¹⁶ We know that at a certain point the relations between Jews and Greeks had gotten so bad in Alexandria that a Jewish delegation headed by Philo was sent to Rome to advocate on behalf of the Jews and against their Greek enemies.¹⁷ Philo's opponent in this conflict, Apion, wrote a treatise entitled, *Against the Jews*, which was very influential among the Greek population of Alexandria and influenced Romans like Tacitus.¹⁸ Philo of Alexandria records his version of the dispute in *Embassy to Gaius*.¹⁹ Josephus' account of the conflict between the Alexandrian Jews and their Greek neighbors is contained in the tract, *Against Apion*.²⁰

Most often, the Gentiles accused the Jews of the Hellenistic world of atheism and misanthropy.²¹ The accusation of atheism is, of course, entirely understandable given the

¹⁵ Luke Timothy Johnson, *Among the Gentiles; Greco-Roman Religion and Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 113. See also Been Zeev, "Jews among Greeks," 373.

¹⁶ Birger Pearson, "Christians and Jews in First Century Alexandria" *HTR* 79.1-3 (1986): 207.

¹⁷ Josephus, *Ant.*, 18.257-260.

¹⁸ Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, 10.

¹⁹ See especially Philo, *Embassy*, 120-136. In *Embassy* Philo presents to Gaius the sufferings of the Jews whom God had providentially chosen as his special and unique people. He describes the reasons why the Jewish nation sets itself apart by following its ancestral traditions instead of engaging in worship of the Roman Emperor and the Greco-Roman pantheon. Philo's objective is to persuade the Emperor that the "Jews should be set alongside the other nations who also have their own laws" and allowed to observe their own ancestral traditions. David. T. Runia, "Philo and the Gentiles," in *Attitudes to Gentiles in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (ed. David Sim and James McLaren; LNTS 499; London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 38-39.

²⁰ In *Ag. Ap.* Josephus defends Judaism against its Greek detractors with four strategies: "Pitting Gentile claims against one another, comparing Moses with other great figures, noting examples of imitation, and direct and open criticism of the accusers. In all of these lines of defense Josephus is consistent in upholding that the Jewish way of life in no way is inferior to any other way of life. In fact, it is the reverse; the Jewish way of life is superior to those espoused by Gentiles." James S. McLaren, "Josephus and the Gentiles," in *Attitudes to Gentiles in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (ed. David Sim and James McLaren; LNTS 499; London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 68.

²¹ Josephus writes in *Ag. Ap.* 2.148, "Moreover, since this Apollonius does not do like Apion, and lay a continued accusation against us, but does it only by starts, and up and down his discourse, while he sometimes reproaches us as *atheists, and man-haters* [emphasis mine], and sometimes hits us in the teeth with our want of courage, and yet sometimes, on the contrary, accuses us of too great boldness, and madness in our conduct; nay, he says that we are the weakest of all the barbarians, and that this is the reason why we are the only people who have

mentality of the polytheistic Hellenists of the first century.²² The Jews refused to participate in the civil and imperial cults of the Greco-Roman cities.²³ According to Josephus, it was the charge of refusing to erect statues and altars to the Roman Empire that Apion leveled against the Jews of Alexandria.²⁴ Since the Mosaic Law forbade the object of worship to be pictured, some idol-worshipping Hellenists assumed that Jews worshipped no god at all, or something so shameful that it must be kept secret.²⁵ With respect to misanthropy, it was likely the aloofness accorded to the Gentiles by many first century Jews that occasioned the controversy. Tacitus summarizes well such feelings of hostility accorded to Jews,

Whatever their origin, these rites are maintained by their antiquity: the other customs of the Jews are base and abominable, and owe their persistence to their depravity: for the worst rascals among other peoples, renouncing their ancestral religions, always kept sending tribute and contributing to Jerusalem, thereby increasing the wealth of the Jews; and again, the Jews are extremely loyal toward one another, and always ready to show compassion, but toward every other people they feel only hate and enmity.²⁶

made no improvements in human life.” See also Johnson, *Among the Gentiles*, 112, “The Jews’ denial of all other gods but their own, together with the claim that their god was invisible and incapable of being represented by any material form—even at their magnificent temple in Jerusalem, which was one of the world’s architectural marvels, led easily to their being perceived as a species of superstition and atheism.”

²² See Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 67.14.1-3, text in Menahem Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism* (3 vols, Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1980), 2.380: “And the same year Domitian slew, along with many others, Flavius Clemens the consul, although he was a cousin and had to wife Flavia Domitilla, who was also a relative of the emperor. The charge brought against them both was that of atheism, a charge on which many others who drifted into Jewish ways were condemned. Some of these were put to death, and the rest were at least deprived of their property. Domitilla was merely banished to Pandateria. But Glabrio, who had been Trajan’s colleague in the consulship, was put to death, having been accused of the same crimes as most of the others, and, in particular, of fighting as a gladiator with wild beasts.” See also Martin Goodman, *The Roman World, 44 B.C. – A.D. 180* (London: Routledge, 1997), 302 and *Rome and Jerusalem*, 445.

²³ See Pliny the Elder, *Nat.*, 13.46: “The variety of this class [i.e., date tree], which we offer to the honor of the gods is called chydaeus by the Jews, a race remarkable for their contempt for the divine powers.” Text from Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, 1:493.

²⁴ Josephus *Antiquities of the Jews*, 18.257-258.

²⁵ Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, 8.

²⁶ Tacitus, *Hist.*, 5.5.1, text in Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, 2:26.

It is likely that many first century Jews, especially near the time of the Jewish War and the destruction of the Temple, treated Gentiles as ritually impure and avoided them.²⁷ Apparently, many Jews took it for granted that Hellenists would be involved in idolatry and avoided contact with them so as not to risk becoming ritually impure.²⁸ We find ample evidence of the Jewish attitude of exclusion toward the Gentiles in the NT.²⁹ Not surprisingly, Gentiles considered this desire for separation as “*misanthropy*” and attributed it to the generally poor disposition of the Jewish people. The negative attitude increased after the beginning of the first Jewish War in A.D. 66, when, according to Josephus, the Greek population was driven to massacre the Jews in Syria.³⁰ After violent disturbances in Alexandria between Jews and Greeks, the Roman Emperor Claudius himself directed the Greek Alexandrians to behave kindly towards the Jews while the Jews were told not to attempt to acquire more power and wealth in a city which was not their own.³¹

On the other hand, there is evidence that the many Gentiles had a positive view of Jews and their religion. While there are some Greco-Roman philosophers that speak appreciatively of the Mosaic Law,³² the primary evidence that many Gentiles had a positive view of Jews is the existence of the “God-fearers.”³³

²⁷ Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief*, 75.

²⁸ Gedalyahu Alon, *Jews, Judaism and the Classical World* (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, 1977), 148.

²⁹ See Peter’s interactions with Cornelius 10:9-11:18; Peter’s dispute with Paul in Gal 2:11-14; and the Centurion’s declaration in Matt 8:8/Luke 6:6-7.

³⁰ Josephus, *J.W.* 7.47 and 2.559-561. Martin Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem*, 407, writes, “Even in places where Jews had enjoyed good relations with their fellow citizens in previous years, the conflagration in Jerusalem inevitably raised questions of loyalty. Neighbours who had coexisted in peace for years polarized according to their political affiliations. Pogroms threatened in many places close to Judaea and even as far away as Antioch in Syria.”

³¹ Ben Zeev, “Jews among Greeks and Romans,” 388.

³² Feldman, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 192-193. See also Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, 13.

³³ David Sim, “Gentiles, God-Fearers and Proselytes,” in *Attitudes to Gentiles in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (ed. David Sim and James McLaren; LNTS 499; London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 9, writes, “In the late Second Temple period and beyond we find many Gentiles sympathetic to Judaism who followed some Jewish

Much of our knowledge of God-fearers comes from the NT book of Acts (10: 2, 22, 35; 13:16, 26, 43, 50; 16:14; 17:4, 17; 18:7) where the phrase is used to describe *Gentile sympathizers who had taken on some religious obligations of the Jewish faith (short of full conversion)* and who were active in the synagogues of the first century.³⁴ Acts utilizes two terms in reference to the God-fearers: οἱ φοβούμενοι τον θεόν and οἱ σεβόμενοι τον θεόν. These terms were probably not “technical terms”³⁵ since Acts uses them to refer to more than just Gentile sympathizers as defined above.³⁶ In fact, other ancient documents suggest that the above terms could even refer to those who were devout Jews by birth.³⁷ Despite this fact, God-fearers were indeed a distinguishable group within Judaism.³⁸ As we will note below, it is not the terminology *as such* which is important; rather, it is the *existence* of sympathizers or God-fearers that interests us.³⁹

practices and who were closely affiliated with their local Jewish communities. These people are known today by the generic term ‘God-fearers’, although our sources use other names to identify them as well. The same period also witnessed some Gentiles taking advantage of the relaxation of the boundaries that separated the people of Israel from the other nations, and fully converting to Judaism. The very existence of such converts or proselytes presumes a mechanism by which Gentiles could cross the boundary and become a member of the Jewish people.”

³⁴ See Acts where the term φοβούμενοι τον θεόν is used in 10:2, 22; 13:16, 26 and the term σεβόμενοι τον θεόν is used in 13:50; 16:14; 17:4, 17; and 18:7.

³⁵ Older commentators, such as Ferdinand Hahn, accept that these two Greek terms were used as designations for God-fearers. Ferdinand Hahn, *Mission*, 22. However, the use of these terms in Greco-Roman literature to refer to religious people in general demonstrate that these terms are not “technical.” Scot McKnight, *A Light among the Gentiles* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 110.

³⁶ See Acts 13:43 which mentions “God-fearing proselytes,” a phrase which refers to full converts and not merely sympathizers. Louis Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 342.

³⁷ Feldman, *Jew and Gentile*, 342, mentions *Joseph and Asenath* as an example.

³⁸ McKnight, *A Light*, 113.

³⁹ See McKnight, *A Light*, 122. Josephus mentions that, along with the Jews, the “God-fearers” also sent their offerings to enrich the Jerusalem temple. Josephus, *Ant.*, 14.110.

In the last several decades some scholars have denied that the God-fearers even existed as defined group of Gentiles interested in the Jewish faith.⁴⁰ A. T. Kraabel argues that the God-fearers are a literary construction used by Luke to “show how Christianity had become a Gentile religion *legitimately* [emphasis his] and without losing its Old Testament roots.”⁴¹ Kraabel justifies his view by declaring that the terms for God-fearers used in Acts do not appear in ancient inscriptions.⁴² According to this viewpoint, God-fearers are simply a theological “innovation” created by Luke as a justification for the already-active Gentile mission.

Despite Kraabel’s assurances, many have questioned whether his denial of the existence of the God-fearers is justified.⁴³ Contrary to Kraabel’s supposition, evidence has indeed been found which provides support for the existence of God-fearers in the Jewish inscriptions of Aphrodisias in Asia Minor.⁴⁴ Although the inscriptions likely date to a period later than the end of the first century, they show that there were Gentiles affiliated at various levels to the local synagogue in antiquity.⁴⁵ Levinskaya notes, “The inscription from Aphrodisias for the first time established as a fact what previously had been discussed as a possibility, i.e., that the word θεοσεβής could designate a gentile sympathizer with Judaism.”⁴⁶ It is probably too much to expect an exact match between the terminology used in Acts (e.g., οἱ σεβόμενοι τον θεόν) and that of the

⁴⁰ See A. T. Kraabel, “The Disappearance of the God-Fearers,” in *Diaspora Jews and Judaism: Essays in Honor of, and in Dialogue with, A. Thomas Kraabel* (ed. J. A. Overman and R. S. MacLennan; Atlanta: Scholar’s Press, 1992).

⁴¹ Kraabel, “The Disappearance,” 120.

⁴² Kraabel, “The Disappearance,” 116-117.

⁴³ Sim, “Gentiles, God-Fearers and Proselytes, 27.

⁴⁴ Irina Levinskaya, “The Inscription from Aphrodisias and the Problem of the God-fearers,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 41.2 (1990), 312-318.

⁴⁵ Sim, “Gentiles, God-Fearers and Proselytes,” 16-17, suggests, “There are a number of Greek inscriptions that refer to Θεοσεβεις, though some of these are difficult to date. The most important of these is the large inscription from Aphrodisias, which is usually dated to the early third century CE.” If correct, this would place the inscription at least 150 years after the destruction of the Second Temple.

⁴⁶ Levinskaya, “The Inscription,” 315.

Aphrodisias inscriptions (e.g., θεοσεβής) since the context of a term's use transmits at least as much if not more meaning than lexical form.⁴⁷ Overman offers a similar critique of Kraabel,

This is particularly true in Kraabel's article where he is concerned simply with the term φοβούμενος or σεβόμενος in his study of more than 100 synagogue inscriptions. The specific name or title of a group of Gentile 'sympathizers' is far less important than the question concerning evidence from this period which might indicate that Jewish communities of the diaspora had included such a group of Gentiles in their life and worship.⁴⁸

In addition to ancient inscriptions, evidence for the existence of the God-fearers can be observed in other ancient Jewish writings like those of Josephus and Philo.⁴⁹ Rainer Riesner argues that the existence of the God-fearers is attributable to the active apologetic efforts of the Diaspora Jewish communities which lived under the influence of Gentile governments that were not always friendly.⁵⁰ There are other indications of the apologetic activities of such Jews as well.⁵¹

Moreover, there is ample evidence that many first century pagan authors were preoccupied with the increasing numbers of non-Jews who were sympathetic to the Jewish faith.⁵² For example, Thomas Finn notes a treatment of God-fearers from Juvenal's *Satires*:

⁴⁷ Levinskaya "The Inscription," 316, helpfully notes, "But it is also well-known that some words have a technical meaning when they are used in a particular context and outside this context have a more general meaning."

⁴⁸ J. Andrew Overman, "The God-Fearers: Some Neglected Features," *JSNT* 32 (1988), 22.

⁴⁹ See Overman, "The God-Fearers," 23, "We have seen that the literature from this period also supports the same phenomenon. Philo, Josephus and Juvenal all report the attraction of the Jewish religion to both Greeks and Romans. These Gentiles were apparently drawn to Judaism in significant numbers and on occasion, according to Juvenal, fully participated in Jewish worship and practice."

⁵⁰ Riesner, "A Pre-Christian Jewish Mission?," 236.

⁵¹ Josephus writes in *Ag. Ap.* 2.282: "Nay, farther, the multitude of mankind itself have had a great inclination of a long time to follow our religious observances; for there is not any city of the Grecians, nor any of the barbarians, nor any nation whatsoever, whither our custom of resting on the seventh day hath not come, and by which our fasts and lighting up lamps, and many of our prohibitions as to our food, are not observed." Thomas Finn also cites Philo's explanation of Exod 22:20 (LXX) which he refers to Gentiles who worship the one true God along with the Jews. See Thomas Finn, "God-Fearers Reconsidered," *CBQ* 47 (1985), 82-83.

⁵² For a summary of such evidence from Greek and Latin authors, see Feldman, *Jew and Gentile*, 344-348.

Some who have had a father who reveres the Sabbath, worship nothing but the clouds, and the divinity of the heavens, and see no difference between eating swine's flesh, from which their father abstained, and that of man; and in time they take to circumcision. Having been wont to flout the laws of Rome, they learn and practice and revere the Jewish law, and all that Moses handed down in his secret tome, forbidding to point out the way to any not worshipping the same rites, and conducting none but the circumcised to the desired fountain. For all which the father was to blame, who gave up every seventh day to idleness, keeping it apart from all the concerns of life.⁵³

This piece of evidence from Juvenal suggests the existence of both God-fearers (such as the fathers who keep the Sabbath,) and proselytes (i.e., the children who fully convert by being circumcised, keeping the Law, studying the Torah scroll, and participating in the life of the community through ceremonial washings and worship).⁵⁴

Finally, from the standpoint of logic, we may assume that if at least some first century Gentiles converted to Judaism, then there must have existed a spectrum between interested pagans and full proselytes. While it was difficult for a Gentile to become a proselyte (or convert) to Judaism, it was much easier to become a God-fearer or sympathizer.⁵⁵ According to Cohen, first century Judaism required three things of converts: renunciation of pagan gods, the rite of circumcision (for men) and baptism (for men and women), and full integration in the Jewish community.⁵⁶ Any of one of these three requirements would have been demanding for a first century Gentile to fulfill, let alone all three. For men sympathetic to Judaism, adult circumcision

⁵³ Juvenal, *Satires*, 14.96-106. Text from Stern, *Greek and Latin Authors*, 2.102-103. See Finn, "The God-Fearers Reconsidered," 81.

⁵⁴ Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, 270.

⁵⁵ Louis Feldman notes the difference between joining a mystery cult and becoming a proselyte to Judaism in the first century, "But there was a difference between becoming a Jew and entering the Eleusinian Mysteries or joining Mithraism or the cult of Isis. In those cases one did not necessarily deny the distinctive gods of the Roman Empire; one merely added another god or cult, whereas Judaism alone insisted that the sine qua non for entrance into Judaism was complete disavowal of all other gods. Moreover, Judaism alone insisted that identification with the national aspirations of the Jews was a prerequisite for conversion." Feldman, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 288-289.

⁵⁶ Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, 46.

was painful and performance of such a rite could be met with serious opposition from peers.⁵⁷ Therefore it is reasonable to assume that sympathizers or God-fearers did indeed exist in first century Judaism.

In our reflections above on the relationship of Gentiles to Jews in the first century we noted a diversity of attitudes held by Gentiles regarding their Jewish neighbors, from downright hatred to great respect. The same could be said about the attitude of first century Jews toward their Gentile neighbors which we will analyze below.

B. The Ambivalence of First Century Jews toward Their Gentile Neighbors

There is no single answer to the question, “How did first century Jews view their Gentile neighbors?” As is true today, there was a vast spectrum of viewpoints among the Jewish communities as to how close they should approach the Gentile world. We have evidence, for example, that in general first century Jews (both in the Diaspora and Palestine) considered Gentiles as lawless “sinners,” effectively outside of the covenant which was demarcated by the keeping of *Torah*.⁵⁸ On the other hand, many have argued that there was a difference between how the Jews of the Hellenistic Diaspora and the Jews of Palestine viewed the Gentiles during in the first century. However, such a distinction in attitudes is, from a certain point of view, artificial, because all Jews were confronted with a measure of Hellenism.⁵⁹ Shaye Cohen writes,

⁵⁷ Josephus summarizes the challenges of full conversion in the account of King Izates’ effort to obtain circumcision after embracing the Jewish faith of his mother. According to Josephus, even the Jew who converted Izates feared that circumcising him could cause a civil disturbance. See Josephus, *Ant.*, 20.38-48.

⁵⁸ See for example, Gal 2:15: “We who are Jews by birth and not ‘Gentile sinners.’” James Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways between Christianity and Judaism and Their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (2nd ed; London: SCM Press, 2006), 135-137, cites a number of passages from Jewish apocryphal sources that speak of Gentiles in general as “sinners.” Dunn notes as well that those considered “apostate Jews” would also be categorized similarly.

⁵⁹ Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism; Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period* (trans. John Bowden; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 104; trans. of *Judentum und Hellenismus, Studien zu ihrer Begegnung unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Palästinas bis zur Mitte des 2 Jh.s v. Chr* (WUNT 10; 2nd rev. and enl. ed; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1973), “On the whole, it emerges that Hellenism also gained ground as an intellectual power in Jewish Palestine early and tenaciously. From this

“All the varieties of Judaism in the Hellenistic period, of both diaspora and the land of Israel, were Hellenized, that is, were integral parts of the culture of the ancient world . . . It is a mistake to imagine that the land of Judea preserved a “pure” form of Judaism and that the diaspora was the home of adulterated or diluted forms of Judaism.”⁶⁰ To put it simply, both the Jews of Palestine and the Jews of the Hellenistic world were constantly exposed to the cultural paradigms of the Greco-Roman world.⁶¹ Or to put in terms of the NT, Jesus, a Palestinian Jew, was himself raised in *Galilee of the Gentiles* (Matt 4:15) and Paul, a “Hebrew” among “Israelites” (2 Cor 11:22), was born in the Gentile city of Tarsus in Cilicia (Acts 22:3).

However, having made this qualification, evidence suggests that, in general, Hellenistic Jews of the Diaspora were more inclusive toward Gentiles and their culture. One of the most notable figures of Hellenistic Judaism, Philo of Alexandria, is a perfect example of Hellenistic Jews who embraced Greco-Roman culture while maintaining their cultural identity.⁶² Although Hellenistic Jews for the most part lived in self-contained communities,⁶³ by necessity those communities were closer in proximity and influence to Greco-Roman culture than Jewish communities in certain areas of Palestine, such as Judea.⁶⁴ For example, in Egypt, where there was a large

perspective, the usual distinction between Palestinian and Hellenistic Judaism needs to be corrected. Here it is not only used misleadingly as a designation of subject-matter and in a false contrast as a geographical concept, but tends to give a mistaken account of the new situation of Judaism in the Hellenistic period. From about the middle of the third century BC *all Judaism* [emphasis his] must really be designated as ‘Hellenistic Judaism’ in the strict sense.”

⁶⁰ Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, 27-28.

⁶¹ Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 105, argues, “These circumstances make the differentiation between ‘Palestinian’ and ‘Hellenistic’ Judaism, which is one of the fundamental heuristic principles of New Testament scholarship, much more difficult; indeed, on the whole it proves to be no longer adequate. We have to count on the possibility that even in Jewish Palestine, individual groups grew up bilingual and thus stood right on the boundary of two cultures. This problem arises not only with Jerusalem, but also with Galilee, which had for a long time had [*sic*] special links with the Phoenician cities; we can ask whether some of the immediate circle of Jesus’ disciples were not themselves bilingual.”

⁶² McKnight, *A Light to the Gentiles*, 18.

⁶³ Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, 38.

⁶⁴ Feldman, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 97.

population of Jews, archeological evidence shows a Jewish community that spoke Greek, named their children with Greek names, appealed to Greek courts, and composed literature in Greek.⁶⁵

On the other hand, evidence suggests that certain segments of the Palestinian Jewish population were the least Hellenized and possessed a much less inclusive attitude toward Gentiles. Feldman notes that there was great resistance on the part of Palestinian Jews to Greek language and culture:

Letters, contracts, documents, Dead Sea Scrolls, rabbinic works—all indicate that the predominant language of the Jews of Palestine throughout the Hellenistic and Roman periods—in fact, from the time of the Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C.E. until approximately two centuries after the Arab conquest of Palestine—was not Greek but Aramaic, though Hebrew continued to be spoken certainly through the Mishnaic period. When Titus sought to convince the Jews to surrender Jerusalem, he sent Josephus to speak with them in their “ancestral language,” presumably Aramaic (*War* 5.361).⁶⁶

It seems that Palestinian Jews were extremely reluctant to adopt the cultural attitudes of Hellenism and the religious worldview that was foundational to that culture. Feldman argues that “During the Hellenistic Period, except for the brief episode of the Hellenized high priests Jason and Menelaus, we hear of no instances where Jews (and we do not know their numbers) worshipped Greek gods or combined them with the Jewish G-d.”⁶⁷ An obvious example of the religious exclusion separating Palestinian Jews and Gentiles is the famous separation in the Temple court that no Gentile could pass through on pain of death.

But, perhaps the best evidence of Jewish antagonism toward Hellenism and its representatives are the wars fought against the Greco-Roman powers by Palestinian Jews in the Maccabean period, the late first century, and early second century. The suffering of the Palestinian Jewish people under Antiochus IV Epiphanes occurred according to the author of 2

⁶⁵ Ben Zeev, “Jews among the Greeks and Romans,” 371.

⁶⁶ Feldman, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 100.

⁶⁷ Feldman, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 99.

Maccabees because of the “extreme Hellenization of those Jews who had been ready to give up the exclusivity of Judaism in order to become an integral part of the Hellenistic world.”⁶⁸ The causes of the Jewish War of A. D. 66-73 are many, but it, along with the Bar-Kokhba revolt (A.D. 132-136) certainly contributed toward the alienation of Palestinian Jewish communities and Gentiles.⁶⁹ In addition, we know of serious armed conflict between Jews and the Roman authorities outside of Palestine, especially in Alexandria (occasioned by King Agrippa’s visit to Alexandria in A.D. 38), but also in other parts of the Roman Empire.⁷⁰ All of these examples of the rejection of the Hellenistic world in general and Gentiles in particular point towards the critical ingredient of Jewish discontent: the threat of religious perversion (either coerced or voluntary) by Hellenism and its Gentile proponents.⁷¹ Thus, we see a powerful sense of exclusion of the Gentiles from Palestinian Judaism of the first century.

However, for both Hellenized Jews, and their more conservative counterparts, from either the Diaspora or Palestine, the attitude was much different if the Gentiles were not threatening religious purity but were instead seeking the wisdom of the Law. It is in this connection that we can briefly mention the attitude of first century Judaism to Gentile seekers. It seems that first century Jews had an overall positive view of Gentiles who submitted themselves meaningfully to the demands of the Jewish religion as proselytes or God-Fearers.⁷² Where there was a negative

⁶⁸ Ben Zeev, “Jews among the Greeks and Romans,” 372. Ironically, 2 Maccabees is written entirely in Greek.

⁶⁹ Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, 49.

⁷⁰ Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, 12.

⁷¹ Sanders, *Judaism*, 42. A wonderful example of this principle at work is Emperor Gaius’ abortive effort to erect a statue in honor of himself inside the Jerusalem temple. According to Josephus, so many Jews offered their lives in peaceful protest against this edict that it was never performed and later withdrawn after the Emperor’s assassination in Rome. See Josephus, *Ant.*, 18.261-272; 18.305-309.

⁷² McKnight, *A Light to the Gentiles*, 43.

attitude at all, it was related to a Jewish fear that Gentile seekers might fall back into their pagan vices or that there were mixed motives in their desire for conversion.⁷³

If first century Jews had a generally positive view towards Gentiles who wanted to take on the burden of *Torah*, then is it possible that this attitude led to active pursuit of Gentile converts? The existence of such an effort could be alluded to by Matt 23:15 where Jesus castigates the Pharisees for the spiritual ruin they bring to their proselytes (“You travel over land and sea to win a single convert [ἓνα προσήλυτον]”). Today, many commentators would reject the idea that this refers to Jewish “missionaries” voyaging long distances to make converts among pagans and instead give other interpretations to this saying.⁷⁴ For example, Lietaert Peerbolte argues that 23:15 refers to the Pharisees’ “eagerness to gain followers for their type of Judaism, not as an accurate description of missionary journeys undertaken by Jews in general.”⁷⁵ Given the body of historical evidence, which does not favor an outward-focused missionary enterprise aimed at converting Gentiles, it is probably better to say that Jewish “mission” relied on the personal efforts of the seeker and on positive reception from Jewish teachers. Jeremias expresses this concept well:

Of course the Jewish mission had its limitations, and should not be compared with what we understand by the term ‘mission’ today. We know absolutely nothing about any official sending forth of missionaries by Jewish authorities; rather did the mission in general depend *upon personal initiative* (cf. John 7:35) and upon the attraction of synagogue worship.⁷⁶

⁷³ Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, 46.

⁷⁴ Riesner writes, “The great importance of Matthew 23:15 can be seen by the space given to it even in modern discussions of a pre-Christian Jewish mission. If we had other evidence for such a mission, we should interpret the logion in conformity with it, but since such clear evidence is lacking, we should ask if there are other possible or even probable ways of understanding.” Riesner, “A Pre-Christian Jewish Mission?,” 232-33. Some alternate explanations are that Jews are converting other Jews to a sect (like Phariseeism) or are assisting God-fearers to convert to full proselytes (i.e., undertaking circumcision). See Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 669.

⁷⁵ Lietaert Peerbolte, *Paul the Missionary*, 50-52.

⁷⁶ Jeremias, *Promise*, 16.

It is certainly possible that Gentile seekers would have been received positively in many quarters in first century Judaism. For example, Bornkamm argues that the rabbinic school of Hillel had a welcoming attitude toward Gentile seekers and such an attitude may have rubbed off on Saul of Tarsus.⁷⁷ However, such a positive reception may have been more out of apologetic concerns (i.e., to win acceptance and security from the Gentile world) than out of an altruistic desire to assist the Gentile seekers to discover truth.⁷⁸

Another example of a more or less positive reception of a Gentile convert can be found in the apocryphal work, *Joseph and Aseneth*. This Jewish work likely composed during the first century (or perhaps slightly before),⁷⁹ contains the story of the patriarch Joseph's marriage to the Egyptian priest's daughter, Aseneth (Gen 41:45). According to the first story (chs. 1-21), Joseph refuses to marry Aseneth because she is an idolater, but instead prays for her conversion (8:9). Aseneth repents of her idolatry and, during a seven-day fast, converts to the worship of God. Afterwards, according to God's promise, she is married to Joseph (18:1-21:9). According to Rainer Riesner, *Joseph and Aseneth* shows the general paradigm in Jewish proselytism: A Gentile approaches a Jew and is converted through divine agency (as opposed to Jews actively

⁷⁷ Bornkamm, who argues for the existence of a Jewish mission, claims, "The Jewish mission reached its climax under the protection of Augustus' *pax romana*. Among the Jewish groups in Palestine the school of Hillel—who himself came from the Babylonian diaspora—had the most positive attitude towards mission. It was also relatively open to Hellenistic culture. We must therefore suppose that Paul the 'Hillelite', the citizen of Rome and Tarsus, was already familiar with the practice and problems of the Jewish mission before he became a Christian." Günther Bornkamm, "End Expectation and the Church in Matthew," in *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (ed. G. Bornkamm, G. Barth, and H. J. Held; London: SCM Press, 1963), 53.

⁷⁸ So says Goodman, "If I am right . . . Jews in the first century might have favoured an apologetic mission to win gentile sympathizers, but they would have seen no point in a proselytizing mission to win new Jews." Goodman, *Mission*, 92.

⁷⁹ Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, 103-107.

seeking out converts).⁸⁰ It is important to note that after a negative reception (i.e., Joseph refuses to associate with Aseneth), there is generally a positive portrayal of a Gentile convert.⁸¹

Besides the general ambivalence to Gentiles we have already established in this chapter, another reason exists for this “passive” concept of Jewish mission and proselytism. At the root of the Jewish passivity with respect to Gentile inclusion lies the theology of “eschatological pilgrimage,” or the belief that at the end of time the Gentile nations would seek out Israel due to the eschatological influence of YHWH.⁸² Since we will comment more on this idea later, we will now only note its effects on the first century Jewish attitudes toward Gentile inclusion.

In summary, just as the Gentiles had a profoundly ambivalent attitude toward first century Judaism, so also did first century Jews experience ambivalence with regard to their relationship to the Hellenistic world. We have seen that at times, many in the Greco-Roman establishment viewed the Jews as separatist misanthropic atheists. At times, first century Jews, especially those Palestinian Jews of a less Hellenized cloth, saw Gentiles as idol-worshipping sources of pollution and a threat to true faith. Sometimes these feelings of antipathy erupted into unbelievable carnage and lamentable destruction before, during and shortly after the first century (e.g., the wars of the Maccabees, the Alexandrian unrest, the Jewish War of A.D. 66-73, and the Bar Kokhba rebellion of the early second century). However, there were just as many times, if not more, that Jews and the Gentiles of the Roman world learned to accept one another, even to the

⁸⁰ Riesner, “A Pre-Christian Jewish Mission,” 227.

⁸¹ The story of the conversion of Achior in Jdt 14:1-10 is another example of a conversion to Judaism where the initiative comes from the Gentile. In this case, Achior even submits himself to circumcision: “When Achior saw all that the God of Israel had done, he believed firmly in God. So he was circumcised, and joined the house of Israel, remaining so to this day” (Jdt 14:10). See also Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, 45.

⁸² McKnight, *A Light to the Gentiles*, 48.

point of dialogue and conversion, especially when the impetus came from the side of the Gentile towards the Jew.⁸³

III. The Foundation of Openness to Gentile Inclusion: The OT Concept of the Nations

Given the violent history between the Jews and the Greco-Roman powers in the first century and the years leading up to it, we can justifiably ask why the Jews had any regard for Gentiles at all. Also, with respect to the vast cultural divide between the monotheistic faith of Judaism and the diverse polytheistic nature of Hellenism, it seems impossible that there should be any point of contact for these two first century poles. Yet, there was. The basis of that contact, at least on the Jewish side, was the OT concept of the nations.

A. Universalism in the OT

Over and against the particularistic and local character of the gods and religion in general throughout the Ancient Near East, the Yahwistic faith of Israel confessed that YHWH was lord over all the gods, all the earth, and thus, over all the nations. Hahn writes, “Although Israel’s faith was particularist from the outset, it took on a universalistic aspect very early—as early as the contact with the idea of celestial gods in the area of Canaan. Even if the existence of other gods was not denied, the superiority of Yahweh to all other deities was yet consistently asserted, and the exclusive claim of the jealous God of Israel stressed.”⁸⁴ Universalism in the OT, as I am defining it, is not that all nations will become part of Israel, the chosen people. Rather, universalism is YHWH’s rule over all the nations and thus the responsibility of all nations to acknowledge it. A helpful way to think about universalism is in terms used by Anthony Gelston in his study of Second Isaiah: “There is first the affirmation that YHWH is the only true God, Sovereign over all creation, and therefore over all mankind. There is secondly the expectation

⁸³ McKnight, *A Light to the Gentiles*, 49.

⁸⁴ Hahn, *Mission*, 18.

this truth will be recognized by the Gentile nations no less than by Israel, with the corollary that they will submit to him and acknowledge his universal rule.”⁸⁵ While Gelston’s “corollary” probably more represents the theology of Second Isaiah, his first two affirmations are broadly true of much of the OT discussion of the nations.

There are many texts which communicate this concept of universalism. Some of the most powerful can be found in the Psalms, such as Ps 67. The hymn of Ps 67, utilizing the Aaronic blessing framework, anticipates that the nations (גוֹיִם) and peoples (עַמִּים) of the earth will recognize the lordship of YHWH through the blessing of his people, Israel, and participate in it.⁸⁶ In Ps 67, we see the nations, who are under the authority of YHWH, becoming increasingly aware of his lordship until they give voice to his praises.

Similarly, Ps 96 and 98 emphasize the world-wide domination of YHWH and call the nations to submit to YHWH’s judgment and sing his praises. As Christopher Wright points out, the “new song” of 96:1 and 98:1 is not really new at all, since Israel would have voiced the contents of this song frequently in its cultic praise.⁸⁷ What makes the song new is *where it is being sung* and *who is singing it*. In Ps 96 and 98, the song is sung not by Israel, but by the nations who have recognized that “all the gods of the nations (עַמִּים) are idols” (96:5) and that YHWH will “judge the peoples with equity” (96:10, 13). Thus, it is not only YHWH’s existence, but also his right to rule, that the nations must confess.

In addition to the Psalms, several texts in Ezekiel (36:23-36; 38:23) equate the nations’ recognition of YHWH’s power and deeds with their acceptance of his authority. Walter Vogels

⁸⁵ Anthony Gelston, “Universalism in Second Isaiah,” *JTS* 43 (1992): 396.

⁸⁶ See Carl Bosma and Eep Talstra, “Psalm 67: Blessing, Harvest and History: A Proposal for Exegetical Methodology,” *CTJ* 36 (2001): 312-313.

⁸⁷ Christopher Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative* (Downer’s Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 480.

remarks that such recognition of YHWH is much more than intellectual assent; it is actually practical acceptance of YHWH's authority.⁸⁸ This is especially evident in the phrase, *וַיֵּדְעוּ כָּל־אֲדָמָי* (‘They [the nations] will know that I am YHWH’). Israel’s “knowing YHWH,” with its subsequent responsibilities, is not really different than the nations “knowing YHWH” as both involve the recognition of YHWH as God and submission to his will.⁸⁹ There is a parallel to Ezekiel in Isa 19:16-25 where a restored Egypt is spoken of in covenantal terms similar to those used for Israel. In this prophetic text, Egypt recognizes YHWH and acknowledges him through worship and life (19:21).

We could go on almost indefinitely citing texts which show the universal nature of YHWH's rule over the nations and the subsequent response required of them. Universalism is a cornerstone of the theological foundation for the concept of Gentile inclusion which appeared within some quarters of first century Judaism. However, there is another element in the OT that contributes to the idea of Gentile inclusion: Israel as YHWH's representative to the nations.

B. Israel as YHWH's Representative to the Nations

In the OT, Israel fundamentally mediates YHWH's presence to the Gentile nations. The foundation of such mediation is YHWH's election of Israel. In short, “Israel is God's elect, the

⁸⁸ Vogels writes, “In most cases a divine salvific action precedes this formula of recognition [*They will know that I am Yahweh*]. God acts, intervenes in the history of Israel, and so Israel ‘will know that I am Yahweh’. Divine action—human recognition is a basic movement in covenant theology. And indeed the verb ‘to know’ is one of those technical verbs used to express the total submission of the covenant partner . . . In the above quoted text (36, 23-36) Ezekiel applies the same formula upon the nations which he also does in the some other texts: ‘So I will show my greatness and my holiness and make myself known in the eyes of many nations. Then they will know that I am Yahweh’ (Ezek 38.23; cf. also vv. 16, 37, 28; 38, 39; 7.23). This clearly shows that the salvific actions of God were also in view of the nations. God has basically the same intention with the nations as he had with Israel because both ‘will know that I am Yahweh’. Far from being pure spectators—witnesses of something which would concern only Yahweh and Israel, the nations are directly involved.” Vogels, *God's Universal Covenant*, 69.

⁸⁹ This is especially evident through Ezekiel's prophecy of the renewal of Egypt in 29:13-16. Using the same language as is used for the return of Israel from exile, Ezekiel predicts God's gracious acts to reestablish Egypt. See Vogels, *Universal Covenant*, 97.

other nations are not.”⁹⁰ However, Israel’s election had a purpose. Michael Bird writes, “The purpose of Israel’s election in the divine mandate was not wholly introspective and isolationist, but included an intermediary role before all nations.”⁹¹ This is obvious from Abraham’s call as narrated in Gen 12:3: “I will bless whoever blesses you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on the earth [וְכָל־בְּרִיָּוֹת הָאָרֶץ] will be blessed through you.” The prepositional phrase בְּךָ indicates that the blessing of the nations would come “through” or “by” the means of Abraham, the founder of Israel.⁹² Of course, Abraham, by extension, came to represent all of Israel which is given the role to be a blessing to the nations.⁹³

As YHWH’s representative, Israel’s duty was to make YHWH known to the nations. Vogels writes,

Yahweh chose first one particular people, Israel, with whom he concluded a covenant, and to whom he revealed himself gradually during this second period of salvation history. He also cared about the nations, but they lacked the knowledge of Yahweh and his revelation, and could not therefore have a real covenant relationship with Yahweh. Israel’s special role and mission is to communicate this knowledge to the nations. The salvation of the nations will be accomplished only ‘in’ and ‘through’ Israel.⁹⁴

The idea that Israel would make YHWH “known” to the nations could imply a “mission” at first glance. However, we must distinguish between the terms “*centripetal*” and “*centrifugal*” with respect to Israel’s task to make YHWH known the nations. The “centripetal” task refers to

⁹⁰ James Chuckwuma Okoye, *Israel and the Nations* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 2006), 1-2. See Deut 7:7-8: “The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt.”

⁹¹ Michael Bird, *Jesus and the Origin of Gentile Mission*, 126.

⁹² F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, “בְּ,” BDB, 89.

⁹³ See also Gen 18:17; 22:18; 26:4. Christopher Wright notes: “God’s mission is to bless all the nations of the earth. But for that universal aim he chose the very particular means—the people of Israel. Their uniqueness was for the sake of God’s universality. Thus, their unique standing as God’s *chosen* people was in order that the rest of the nations would come to be *blessed* through Abraham.” Wright, *Mission of God*, 462.

⁹⁴ Vogels, *Universal Covenant*, 115.

Israel's gaining the attention of the nations by distinguishing itself so that the nations could *come and witness* YHWH in Israel.⁹⁵ Thus, the centripetal task can succeed only insofar as Israel succeeds in holiness.⁹⁶ The "centrifugal" task is Israel actually "going out" to the nations as a witness to the reality and claims of YHWH.⁹⁷

The predominant image of Israel's representation of YHWH to the nations is centripetal—that is the nations "come to Israel" and "witness YHWH" through Israel. However, a few scholars have noticed that there are suggestions and even some examples of centrifugal representation.⁹⁸ Some common evidence cited for the latter is the story of Jonah and Isa 66:18-19.⁹⁹ While such evidence is admittedly small,¹⁰⁰ it does make one wonder if perhaps there is some connection between these texts and the early Christian movement's eventual centrifugal orientation toward Gentile inclusion.¹⁰¹

The vast majority of texts connecting Israel and the nations in the OT are centripetal in orientation, meaning that they envision the Gentiles traveling to Israel to pledge their allegiance to YHWH. Jeremias, the most influential proponent of this concept, refers to it as the "eschatological pilgrimage." He writes:

In all the passages of the Old Testament, without exception, in which reference is made to the eschatological pilgrimage of the Gentiles, the goal of the pilgrimage is the scene of God's revelation of himself, Zion, the holy Mountain of God. From this it is to be inferred that the movement is always thought of as 'centripetal', the Gentiles will not be evangelized where they dwell, but will be summoned to the Holy Mount by the divine epiphany. Zion is always the appointed centre for their

⁹⁵ Wilson, *The Gentiles*, 2-3.

⁹⁶ Deut 7:6: "For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession."

⁹⁷ Vogels, *Universal Covenant*, 115.

⁹⁸ Bird, *Jesus and the Origin of Gentile Mission*, 165.

⁹⁹ See also Isa 42:1 and 49:6.

¹⁰⁰ For a discussion of centrifugal overtones in the OT, see Okoye, *Israel and the Nations*, 12.

¹⁰¹ See Bird, *Jesus and the Origin of Gentile Mission*, 165.

gathering . . . The fact is that wherever the Old Testament is concerned with the redemption of the Gentiles, it guarantees them a share in the revelation vouchsafed to Israel, and inclusion in God's redeemed community.¹⁰²

As Jeremias implies, the OT often views this centripetal movement of the nations toward Israel as an eschatological event precipitated by YHWH himself.¹⁰³ There are a number of texts that allude to this eschatological movement of the nations to Israel: Ps 87; Isa 2:1-4 (par. Mic 4:1-4); 18:7; 25:6-8; 66:18-19; Jer 3:17; 16:19; Mic 7:12; Zeph 3:8-10; Zech 2:10-13; 8:20-23; and 14:16-19.¹⁰⁴

In addition to the eschatological pilgrimage, we can add the concept of Israel as the "light" and "witness" to the nations, a concept which is centripetal in nature. To that end, Second Isaiah (Isa 40-55) is especially important. Michael Grisanti writes,

The prophet argues that God's special dealings with His chosen people not only benefit Israel, but also carry significance for all nations. Isaiah underscores Israel's role in providing a witness to the nations . . . in the sense of being a people of God whose life shall draw nations to inquire after Yahweh (cf. Isa. 2:1-4; 43:10-11). It is as God's chosen people that Israel can exercise a mediatorial role with regard to the nations. Isaiah's fervent desire for Israel is that they will respond to God's intervention on her behalf and carry out her role as God's servant nation before the world.¹⁰⁵

YHWH makes Israel a light to the nations (לְאוֹר גּוֹיִם) in 42:6; 49:6 and a light to the peoples (לְאוֹר עַמִּים) in 51:4. YHWH calls Israel "my witnesses" (עֵדִי) to all peoples in 43:10, 12; 44:8; and 55:4. In 55:4, the theme of the pilgrimage of nations is directly connected with the concept of

¹⁰² Jeremias, *Promise*, 60.

¹⁰³ Hahn, *Mission*, 19.

¹⁰⁴ In addition to these OT texts, we could also cite a number of other extra-biblical and apocryphal documents such as *Sib. Or.* 3:772-776: "And then, indeed, he will raise up a kingdom for all ages among men, he who once gave the holy Law to the pious, to all of whom he promised to open the earth and the world and the gates of the blessed and all the joys of immortal intellect and eternal cheer. From every land they will bring incense and gifts to the house of the great God. There will be no other house among men, even for future generations to know, except the one which God gave to faithful men to honor (for mortals will invoke the son of the great God.)" See also Tob 13:11; *Sir* 36:11-17; *I En* 48:4; *T. Sim.* 7:2; *T. Levi* 18:2-9; *T. Jud.* 24:6; 25:5; *4 Ezra* 6:26; *2 Bar.* 68:5; and Wis 17:31.

¹⁰⁵ Micheal Grisanti, "Israel's Mission to the Nations in Isaiah 40-55: An Update," *MSJ* 9 (1998): 61.

Israel as witness, “See I have made him a witness [עֵד] to the peoples, a leader and commander of the peoples. Surely you will summon nations you know not, and nations that do not know you will hasten to you.” Like the concept of the eschatological pilgrimage, the image of Israel as witness and light to the nations is centripetal in nature. Moreover, it is the motivation (or “light”) of YHWH, whether received directly by the nations or mediated through Israel, that calls them to YHWH’s throne in the eschaton.¹⁰⁶

C. The OT and the Punishment of the Nations

Despite everything that we have said with regard to the positive view of the nations in OT universalism and the eschatological pilgrimage motif, the overall view of the nations in the OT is in fact negative. For Israel, the nations are oppressors and possible sources of pollution. Leviticus 20:23-24 underscores the danger of such pollution in its reference to the defilement of the Canaanite nations:

You must not live according to the customs of the nations I am going to drive out before you. Because they did all these things, I abhorred them. But I said to you, ‘You will possess their land; I will give it to you as an inheritance, a land flowing with milk and honey.’ I am the LORD your God, who has set you apart from the nations.

It is also true that “the fear that other nations’ religious habits might undermine Israel’s religious discipline pervades much of the Bible.”¹⁰⁷ In every prophetic book except for Hosea, an oracle prophesying about the destruction of the nations can be found,¹⁰⁸ and a few books are composed entirely of them (e.g., Obadiah and Nahum). Even Sanders, attempting to argue for a more positive view of the nations, notes “Just as the theme of the deserved punishment of Israel

¹⁰⁶ McKnight writes, “A consistent means of conversion in Jewish thought was that acts of God that led Gentiles to convert. These acts of God were especially prominent at the end of history, effecting a massive conversion to Judaism.” McKnight, *A Light to the Gentiles*, 51.

¹⁰⁷ Robert Goldenberg, *The Nations that Know Thee Not* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 26.

¹⁰⁸ Okoye, *Israel and the Nations*, 70.

recedes in post-biblical literature, that of the punishment of the Gentiles increases. As Israel's punishment at the hands of the nations stretched on, there doubtless seemed less reason for God's spokesmen to say that Israel's sins required punishment."¹⁰⁹ The hostility toward the nations and their religions in the OT and pseudepigraphical literature culminated in outright violence against the Gentiles during the Maccabean period and wars of the first and second centuries A.D.¹¹⁰ Goldenberg writes, "Such antagonism is widespread in biblical literature, and later Jews characteristically picked up this theme from their sacred texts and built their own lives around it. Jewish hostility to other religions was sometimes merely passive . . . at other times, however, Jewish hostility became more violent."¹¹¹ Thus, we see that the negative pole of ambivalence toward the inclusion of Gentiles which existed in the first century had its roots within the Jewish Scriptures. Next to texts that include the Gentile nations under YHWH's rule, there are many more passages that speak critically about the nations and even expect harsh judgments upon them.

IV. Gentile Inclusion for Jesus and His Earliest Successors as Representatives of First Century Judaism

If first century Judaism and the Hebrew Scriptures to which it appealed were basically ambivalent about the inclusion of Gentiles in the believing community, it would not be surprising if Jesus and his earliest successors shared this feeling. Not surprisingly, this is exactly the attitude ascribed to them in NT. In the final section of this chapter I will explain this

¹⁰⁹ E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 215.

¹¹⁰ This can be especially witnessed in the genre of Jewish apocalyptic where often the Gentile nations become objects of YHWH's wrath because of their oppression of Israel. See Michael P. Theophilus, "The Portrayal of Gentiles in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature," in *Attitudes to Gentiles in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (ed. David Sim and James McLaren; LNTS 499; London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 91.

¹¹¹ Goldenberg, *The Nations*, 33.

ambivalence is one of the “ingredients” that led to the phenomenon of Gentile inclusion in the early Christian movement.

A. Evidence for Ambivalence toward Gentiles in Jesus and the Apostle Paul

There are several texts in the NT that suggest that Jesus may have had an ambivalent attitude toward Gentile inclusion. One of the most well-known is Jesus’ interaction with the Syrophoenician Woman in Mark 7:24-29//Matt 15:21-28. This text appears in both Gospels immediately on the heels of a dispute over the ceremonial cleanliness in which Jesus forcefully reprimands (Mark 7:1-13//Matt 15:1-11) and offends (Matt 15:12) the Pharisees. After this dispute (or perhaps *because of this dispute*),¹¹² Jesus leaves the Jewish territories of Galilee and enters the vicinity of Tyre and Sidon. Despite trying to hide himself (Mark 7:24), he is confronted by a Greek (Mark) or Canaanite (Matthew) woman of Syrophoenicia (Mark: ἡ δὲ γυνὴ ἦν Ἑλληνίς, Συροφοινίκισσα τῷ γένει), whose daughter was suffering from the influence of an unclean spirit or demon.¹¹³ In Matthew’s account, the woman’s faith in Jesus’ messianic identity is apparent as she calls him, “Lord, son of David” in 15:22 and worships (προσκυνέω) him in v. 25.¹¹⁴ However, both Mark and Matthew clearly indicate Jesus’ reluctance to heal based on the salvation priority of Israel. The Matthean Jesus simply ignores her until, after the cajoling of his disciples (15:23), he declares, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.”¹¹⁵ The Markan Jesus vocalizes his reluctance to help this Gentile woman, “First let the children eat all

¹¹² Jeremias, *Promise*, 33.

¹¹³ Though Mark initially identifies the source of the daughter’s suffering as an unclean spirit (πνεῦμα ἀκάθαρτον) in 7:25, he later calls it a demon (τὸ δαιμόνιον) in 7:29. Matthew simply says that the daughter is severely demonized (δαιμονίζεται) in 15:22. Mark probably uses the term “unclean spirit” to link this episode with Jesus’ earlier conflict with the Pharisees over cleanliness in 7:1-22. See Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 259.

¹¹⁴ Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 440.

¹¹⁵ Jesus’ delimitation of his mission to the “lost sheep of Israel” (εἰς τὰ πρόβατα τὰ ἀπολωλότα οἴκου Ἰσραὴλ) in Matt 15:24 mirrors Jesus’ direction to his disciples to limit their ministry to the “lost sheep of Israel” (πρὸς τὰ πρόβατα τὰ ἀπολωλότα οἴκου Ἰσραὴλ) in 10:6. See Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 441.

they want [πρῶτον χορτασθῆναι τὰ τέκνα].” Both Mark and Matthew preserve identically Jesus’ justification for his reluctance, “It is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to their dogs” (Mark 7:27c//Matt 15:26). Showing wit and intelligence, the woman embraces this insulting designation,¹¹⁶ replying that even the little dogs eat the (Mark 7:28: “children’s”) crumbs that fall from the (Matt 15:27: “master’s”) table. Jesus is won over by this clever response and the faith behind it.¹¹⁷ Jesus immediately exorcises and heals the Gentile woman’s daughter (Matt: “that very hour”).

What does this episode teach us about the openness of Jesus and his immediate successors to the inclusion of Gentiles? First and most obviously, Jesus and his immediate disciples considered that their ministry was primarily, if not exclusively, to the Jews. A. L. Moore writes, “Jesus limited himself to Israel during his own ministry and apparently directed the disciples to similar limitation during his presence with them.”¹¹⁸ However, this may not indicate that Jesus had no regard for the Gentiles; rather, it could show that Jesus understood Israel to have *priority* over the Gentiles in his own ministry.¹¹⁹ In that connection, Mark’s use of πρῶτον (“first”) could indicate that Jesus and his early successors saw Israel as having “salvation priority.” Wilson argues, “The πρῶτον implies a δεύτερον and probably reflects the notion ‘Jew first and then Greek’ as it is found in Rom. 1:6, 2:9; Acts 3:26, 13:46. Israel’s priority becomes a passing right of only temporary significance, for as a result of her refusal the Gospel goes to the Gentiles.”¹²⁰ The πρῶτον also foreshadows Mark 13:10 where the Gospel proclamation to the nations must

¹¹⁶ Joel Marcus, *Mark 1-8* (AB 27; New York: Doubleday, 1999), 463-464.

¹¹⁷ The Matthean Jesus overtly congratulates the Gentile woman for her faith (15:28 “Woman, you have great faith!”) while the Markan Jesus implies it (7:29: “For such a reply [διὰ τοῦτον τὸν λόγον], you may go; the demon has left your daughter”).

¹¹⁸ Moore, *The Parousia*, 202.

¹¹⁹ Moore, *The Parousia*, 202.

¹²⁰ Wilson, *The Gentiles*, 29-30

happen first, before the Parousia.¹²¹ In conclusion, Jesus' comments to the Syrophoenician woman indicate his concept of the priority of Israel over the Gentiles for salvation, but not necessarily that the Gentiles have no part in salvation.

The setting and discussion in our episode is also very relevant to showing the attitude of Jesus and his earliest successors regarding Gentile inclusion. Mark and Matthew go to great length to point out that Jesus has entered Gentile territory and is interacting with a Gentile.¹²² The connection with the preceding discussion of ritual purity also suggests that this Gentile woman was ritually unclean, not only because she was a Gentile woman (and therefore wouldn't have practiced the ritual purity customs required of Jewish women), but because her daughter was possessed by an *unclean* spirit.¹²³ It seems that Jesus took note of these facts given his less than warm allusion to Gentiles like this woman as dogs, and Jews, like himself and his disciples, as "children" at the master's table.¹²⁴ However, the positive response of the woman indicates her faith and submission to God much like the Centurion whose child/slave was similarly healed at a distance by Jesus in Matt 8:13.¹²⁵

The episode of the healing of the Syrophoenician woman's daughter is indicative of the ambivalence of Jesus and his earliest successors toward Gentile inclusion.¹²⁶ Despite some

¹²¹ Thompson writes, "Thus Mark's use of *πρώτον* in 7:27 and 13:10 suggests that in God's plan for the end the order of events is from Jewish preaching (7:27), to Gentile preaching (13:10; 14:9; 16:15), to the end (13:10)." Thompson, "The Gentile Mission," 24-25.

¹²² Lane argues, "Mark's placement of the incident in the district of Tyre immediately following the discussion of clean and unclean provides a concrete example of Jesus' disregard for the scribal concept of defilement." Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 259. Compare with Acts 10:9.

¹²³ Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 467.

¹²⁴ Marcus notes, "Using terminology that was as insulting in ancient times as it is today, Jesus says in effect that his ministry is limited to God's children, the Jews, and does not extend to Gentile 'dogs' like this Syrophoenician woman and her daughter . . . This extreme example of ethnocentrism characterized some, though by no means all, Jewish teachers." Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, 468.

¹²⁵ Hagner, *Matthew 14-2*, 443.

¹²⁶ Frederick H. Borsch, "Jesus and Women Exemplars" in *Christ and His Communities* (ATHRSupp 11; ed. Arland J. Hultgren and Barbara Hall; Evanston, Ill.: Forward Movement Publications, 1990), 35-36, explains,

serious misgivings about interaction with a Gentile (cf. Acts 10:27-29),¹²⁷ Jesus shows some measure of openness in granting the Gentile woman's request and lauding her faith.¹²⁸ This attitude would later become a defining characteristic of the literature of the early Christian movement.¹²⁹

In addition to the episode of the Syrophoenician woman, Matthew preserves another dominical saying which reveals something of the attitude of Jesus and his earliest successors regarding Gentile inclusion. This saying, found in Matt 10:5-6, forms part of Jesus' so-called Missionary Discourse where the twelve disciples are given authority to cast out demons and heal the sick and then sent out. Abbreviated forms of the discourse can be found in Mark (6:6b-13) and Luke (9:1-6). However, these abbreviated forms do not contain the unique phrase limiting

"Although the story was valuable to the early churches as one of the few examples of Jesus' reaching out to the gentiles, the seeming coarseness of Jesus' dialogue with the woman and his hesitation in responding to her request may also have given the evangelists pause in using it. It is often thought that Luke has declined to include it in his gospel for these reasons. But for the same reasons it is possible that aspects of the story reach deep into the tradition to a time when gentile sensitivities were of less importance and Jesus did indeed believe that he was 'sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel' (Matt. 15:24) for the advent of God's reign. As it stands in the gospels the story now represents a kind of breakthrough on Jesus' part, his finding himself called to reach out beyond his own idea of his mission."

¹²⁷ John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew; Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (ABRL; 5 vols.; New York: Doubleday, 1994), 2:660, proposes that the story of Syrophoenician woman "carries the heavy freight of later Christian theology, specifically the theology of the mission." However, Meier also allows for the possibility that "Christian exegetes would probably have decried the use of 'dogs' to designate Gentiles" with the result that it is unlikely that Christians themselves would have put such objectionable language into Jesus' mouth. The objectionable language could also "simply be a reminder that the sensitivities of first-generation Christians may have been different from ours and that the views of Christians on the nascent Gentile mission may have been more diverse than we imagine." Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 2:660.

¹²⁸ Dunn, *Partings*, 151, notes, "At the same time, however, Jesus is not remembered as one who was hostile to Gentiles. The response he is recalled as making to the two Gentiles who pleaded for his help, the centurion and the Syrophoenician woman, is sufficient proof to the contrary (Matt. 8:5-13/Luke 7:1-10; Mark 7:24-30 par.)."

¹²⁹ Regarding this phenomenon, David Seemuth writes, "In many ways, the early church grappled with the boundaries that distinguished those acceptable to God from those who were not. The inclusion of material in the gospels that highlighted the destruction of commonly held boundaries within Israel (that is, the good Samaritan [Luke 10:33], the faithful centurion [Matt. 8:5-13], the Syrophoenician women [Mark 7:24-30]) served to break down longstanding assumptions regarding the domain of God's gracious activity. God could work in the Samaritan to provide care for the needy. Jesus recognized the faith, and therefore approved, of one who, as a soldier in a nation under foreign rule, may have symbolized all that was seemingly wrong with the Jewish society. The early church came to recognize that God's grace could extend to all, because even the crumbs of God's mercy were sufficient to meet the needs of Gentile believers." David Seemuth, "Mission in the Early Church," in *Mission in the New Testament, an Evangelical Approach* (ed. William Larkin Jr. and Joel Williams; Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1998), 57.

the disciples' work to Israel contained in Matthew: "These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: 'Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel.'" For a reader of Matthew's Gospel, the prohibition in 10:5-6 (cf. 15:24) to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles stands in antithesis to the classical command of Gentile mission in 28:16-20 and a number of other texts referring to Gentile inclusion which we will study in Chapters Five, Six, and Seven.¹³⁰

Given the position of the prohibition at the very beginning of the discourse, we can say that this statement is very important to Matthew's literary goals. Davies and Allison note, "The words are given special prominence by virtue of their initial position in the discourse. And they anticipate 15.24, where Jesus makes it plain that his mission too is only to Israel."¹³¹ Jeremias accounts for 10:5-6 by implying it was simply Matthew's faithful dedication in reproducing Jesus' sayings, even those that were most troubling. He writes,

It is impossible to question the authenticity of Matt. 15:24: to a church which even before Paul's time had accepted the Gentile mission (Acts 11:20 ff.), such a 'particularist' saying must have been repugnant in the highest degree. It is hardly accidental that Matt. 15:24, as well as the similar saying in Matt. 10:5 ff., is absent from Mark and Luke. Matthew's only reason for preserving the logion in spite of its repellent implication was that it bore the stamp of the Lord's authority.¹³²

Though reproduction of Jesus' teachings was no doubt important, it seems that there is more behind this antithesis than simply Matthew's desire to be historically sound.

Davies and Allison suggest that Matthew is too good of a writer to pepper his gospel with contradictions. Instead, the presence of sayings like 10:5-6 with others like 28:16-20 are evidence of "pre/post Easter" scheme (that is, 10:5-6 reflect Jesus' pre-Easter focus on the Jews

¹³⁰ John P. Meier, "Salvation History in Matthew: In Search of a Starting Point," *CBQ* 37.2 (1975), 204.

¹³¹ W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew VII-XVIII*, 165.

¹³² Jeremias, *Promise*, 26-27.

and 28:16-20 reflect his post-Easter command to evangelize the Gentiles).¹³³ The reconciliation of 10:5-6 with other texts referring to Gentile inclusion requires us to observe Matthew's salvation-historical paradigm in action.¹³⁴ The ministry of Jesus was focused on Israel though he makes symbolic gestures in Matthew which suggest the coming of the Gentile mission (e.g., the narratives of the Syrophenician and the Centurion). After the events of Easter, Gentile inclusion takes prominence,¹³⁵ though we may assume that the Matthean community is still engaged in a ministry to Israel at the time of the Gospel's composing. For Matthew, Jesus' death and resurrection inaugurated a new eschatological era in which Gentiles may be included in the Christian community along with responsive Jews.¹³⁶ The *delay of the Parousia* is the time allotted for this eschatological inclusion of Gentiles.¹³⁷

Not surprisingly, others object that there is no "pre/post Easter" dichotomy in Matthew.¹³⁸ Even if Matthew in fact is operating without a "pre/post Easter" dichotomy, then presence of sayings like 10:5-6 and 28:16-20 would merely be indicative of the broader ambivalence to

¹³³ Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew VII-XVIII*, 167. Wilson calls this concept the "*heilsgeschichtlich* interpretation." See Stephan Wilson, *The Gentiles*, 24-25. Eckhard Schnabel argues that although the definitive development of Gentile mission happened after Easter, Jesus foreshadowed this development before his crucifixion, "We conclude, therefore, that the Gospels portray Jesus as ministering to Israel with salvation-historical priority as the people of God. At the same time his ministry was not confined to Jews but extended beyond the boundaries defined by the Sinai covenant. His encounters with Gentiles indicated, sometimes quite clearly, that the gospel of the kingdom of God establishes a new covenant community which encompasses Jews and Gentiles alike. In anticipation of things to come Jesus spoke of a future universal mission of his disciples, the profile of which he delineated after his death and his resurrection." Schnabel, "Jesus and the Beginnings," 58.

¹³⁴ Meier, "Salvation History in Matthew," 204, writes, "There is here no sloppy, eclectic, or schizophrenic juxtaposition of contradictory material. Rather, Matthew is quite consciously ordering an 'economy' of salvation: to the Jews first, and then to the Gentiles. The public ministry of the earthly Jesus stands under geographical and national limitations: the gospel is to be preached only to Israel, and only in the promised land. After the death and resurrection, however, this 'economical' limitation falls at Jesus' all-powerful command (Mt 28:16-20)."

¹³⁵ Meier, "Salvation History in Matthew," 207-210.

¹³⁶ Julius J. Scott, "Gentiles and the Ministry of Jesus: Further Observations on Matt 10:5-6; 15:21-28," *JETS* 33.2 (1990), 167.

¹³⁷ Scott, "Gentiles and the Ministry of Jesus," 167.

¹³⁸ Hahn, *Mission*, 124: "It is not an adequate explanation to say that whereas Matt. 10 refers only to the sending out of the disciples during Jesus' lifetime, 24.14 and 28.19 refer to the period after Easter. For it is quite clear that in chapter 10 the historical situation is arranged for the disciples' mission in the time after Jesus' resurrection, as indeed all the longer discourses of the Gospel directly concern the Church."

Gentiles present throughout ancient Jewish writings. By this time, the reader should not be surprised at such tension as we have noted, again and again, in our analysis of first century Judaism and the OT, that *ambivalence* is the fundamental orientation toward Gentiles. At the conclusion of this discussion, we will suggest some reasoning why such tension exists in attitudes toward Gentile inclusion.

Without a doubt the most vocal and influential Jewish voice in early Christianity agitating for the positive pole of ambivalence to Gentiles was the Apostle Paul. Since so much has been written about Paul and his relationship to Gentiles, we will only make a few brief and judicious remarks that relate to the overall thesis of this chapter that the ambivalence to Gentiles in first century Judaism was one of the factors that led to the *Parousia*'s delay becoming associated with Gentile inclusion in the early Christian movement.

The Apostle Paul was not the first voice in the early Christian movement to encourage Gentile inclusion. After his conversion experience, Paul discovered a movement which in some quarters had already begun to gravitate to the positive pole of first century Jewish ambivalence to Gentiles. For example, Paul quotes early Christian hymns that have universalistic undertones like Philippians 2:6-11 (especially vv. 10-11: "At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord").

Using the example above, Lietaert Peerbolte deduces,

The theological foundation we found in the pre-epistolary traditions [such as the early Christian hymns] contained in Paul's letters, points to an apocalyptic interpretation of salvation brought about by Christ: since God's ultimate intervention in history affects the entire world, salvation can be obtained by anyone who confesses Christ as well as worshipping the one, true God. This view can only be situated in a context in which Jews and Gentiles together formed the Jesus movement. *Thus, Christianity as an open movement formed by Jews and Gentiles alike preceded Paul* [italics his].¹³⁹

¹³⁹ Lietaert Peerbolte, *Paul the Missionary*, 98.

Thus, we can assume that early in his ministry Paul likely faced a full range of opinions on the spectrum of ambivalence towards Gentiles, from those focused entirely on Jews to those who actively promoted inclusion of Gentiles in the predominantly Jewish early Christian communities. In his first visit to Jerusalem, Paul not only personally met the wing of the early Christian community focused on Jewish outreach in Jerusalem (Peter and James, the Lord's Brother), but, according to Acts, he actually preached the Gospel while among them.¹⁴⁰ In contrast, later in his ministry Paul became a key preacher and leader in Antioch where ministry among the Gentiles and Hellenist Jews was fully underway.¹⁴¹ Due to his approval of the association of Jewish and Gentile Christians in Antioch, Paul endures the scorn of the same apostles (Peter and James' representatives) whom he met approximately a decade earlier in Jerusalem.¹⁴²

Interestingly, Paul, who regarded to himself as "The Apostle to the Gentiles,"¹⁴³ seems to retain artifacts of the negative side of ambivalence to Gentiles so common in first century Judaism.¹⁴⁴ Both Acts (22:3) and Paul himself (Phil 3:5 and Gal 1:14) acknowledge that he came

¹⁴⁰ Paul writes in Gal 1:18-19: "Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to get acquainted with Peter and stayed with him fifteen days. I saw none of the other apostles—only James, the Lord's brother." Luke's slightly more embellished account of the same event refers to a meeting with Barnabas and a period of ministry, "So Saul stayed with them and moved about freely in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord" (Acts 9:28).

¹⁴¹ Lietaert Peerbolte, *Paul the Missionary*, 132.

¹⁴² See Paul's reflections on the controversy over Jewish table fellowship with the Gentiles in Galatians 2:11-14. Of this encounter Eckhard Schnabel writes, "Paul would not permit that uncircumcised followers of Jesus, Gentiles who had come to faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior, would become second-class Christians. And Paul was convinced that any differentiation between or separation of Jewish believers and Gentile Christians contradicted the logic of the gospel and denies the efficacy of Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross. This is the apostle's argument in his letter to the Galatian Christians." Eckhard Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary: Realities, Strategies and Methods* (Downer's Grove, Ill.: IVP Academic, 2008), 52.

¹⁴³ See Rom 11:13 ("I am talking to you Gentiles. Inasmuch as I am the apostle to the Gentiles, I take pride in my ministry.") and Gal 2:8 ("For God, who was at work in Peter as an apostle to the circumcised, was also at work in me as an apostle to the Gentiles").

¹⁴⁴ Sean F. Winter, "Paul's Attitudes to the Gentiles," in *Attitudes to Gentiles in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (ed. David Sim and James McLaren; LNTS 499; London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 148-149, highlights this Pauline tendency, "In looking at Paul's response to some non-Jewish beliefs and practices we see clearly that his

from a *Torah*-observant Pharisaical family and strictly upheld that lifestyle, at least until his conversion and likely afterwards for a significant period. As part of his upbringing and study, Paul would have divided the world into two parts, “the world of the Jews and the world of the non-Jews.”¹⁴⁵ He would have stayed separate from Gentiles in order to avoid pollution and assimilation into their culture.¹⁴⁶ Paul himself betrays these attitudes in Galatians 2:15 where he declares, “We who are Jews by birth and not ‘Gentile sinners’ know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ.” Again in Rom 1:18-32, Paul enumerates a panoply of Gentile moral deprivations and the resulting divine judgment engendered by them which any *Torah*-observant Jew could heartily applaud. Even lurking in the heart of one “under obligation to the Greeks” (Rom 1:14) was a remnant of the negative pole of ambivalence to Gentiles.

Yet, without doubt, Paul was able to lay aside any negative feelings and fully embrace his divinely-ordained role as herald to the Gentiles early in his missionary travels.¹⁴⁷ The critical point in Paul’s theology which allowed for large-scale Gentile inclusion in the Jewish-Christian community was his concept of *faith*, a characteristic which he rigorously stipulates does not arise from *Torah*-observance. N. T. Wright argues, “In particular, the first and most characteristic sign of this people [the new covenant people of God], which became its badge, had nothing to do with the ‘works of Torah’ which marked out Jew from the pagan . . . Its badge was the Messiah-

strong affirmation of Gentiles in the church does nothing to blunt the sharpness of his polemic against what he perceives as ‘ungodliness and wickedness.’”

¹⁴⁵ N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (2 vols.; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 1:79.

¹⁴⁶ Schnabel, *Paul*, 41.

¹⁴⁷ Lietaert Peerbolte, *Paul the Missionary*, 190.

badge, namely *pistis*.¹⁴⁸ Because this faith in Jesus as Messiah and Savior could be possessed by anyone, it became the characteristic of “a company that included Jews and Gentiles alike.”¹⁴⁹

Teresa Morgan has recently provided a fresh perspective on Paul’s concept of *faith* that can help us elucidate its connection with Gentile inclusion.¹⁵⁰ Since the times of St. Augustine, *pistis* and *fides* have been understood to refer to the content of belief, *i.e.*, the Christian *faith*.¹⁵¹ In contrast to this understanding, Morgan argues that *pistis* and *fides* are essentially relational terms indicating a connection of trust and confidence between persons.¹⁵² For this reason, *pistis*, or faith, is essential for Gentile inclusion into the Christian community. Through *pistis*, trust and confidence are established between the human (either Jew or Gentile), Christ, and God, allowing each to share in the benefits of that relationship.¹⁵³ *Pistis*, not as an intellectual concept, but as a relational category, connects the Gentile to God in the same way it connects the Jew.¹⁵⁴ Thus, in the concept of faith, Paul had found an idea which could surmount the barrier of *Torah*-observance which made Gentile proselytes rare in first century Judaism.

¹⁴⁸ Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 2:931.

¹⁴⁹ Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 2:931.

¹⁵⁰ Teresa Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith: Pistis and Fides in the Early Roman Empire and Early Churches* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

¹⁵¹ Morgan, *Roman Faith*, 11-12.

¹⁵² Morgan, *Roman Faith*, 20-23.

¹⁵³ Morgan, *Roman Faith*, 281, “In this letter, however, at least partly in response to his need to convince the Galatians, against his Judaizing opponents, that they do not need to keep the law, Paul takes the language of divine-human *pistis* (inherited by him from Judaism, but also recognizable to his gentile audience) in a new direction. For the first time that we know of, he uses *pistis* to articulate the tripartite relationship between God, Christ, and humanity, putting Christ in the centre of a nexus of faithfulness, trustworthiness, and trust which runs in all directions between God and Christ, Christ and humanity, and humanity and God.”

¹⁵⁴ Morgan, *Roman Faith*, 291, states, “At this point it is worth pausing to sum up the most significant ways in which Paul can be seen to be extending the meaning of *pistis* in Galatians and Romans by extending his account of its operation. It has been argued that he uses *pistis* to refer to the relationship of trust/belief between God, Christ, and the faithful, the pledge or assurance secured by Christ which binds them together, the bond formed by the pledge, and the community formed by the bond.”

In addition to his theological reflection on the value of *faith*, Paul himself was powerfully affected by many of the same universalistic texts from the OT that we have cited above, especially those from the book of Isaiah. The Apostle Paul cites Isaiah sixteen times in Romans, with eleven of those citations occurring in chapters 9-11.¹⁵⁵ Moreover, judging from the context of the citations in Romans and the nature of the citations themselves, “it becomes evident that as Paul explained the relationship between Jew and Gentile to the Roman church he was reflecting primarily on, and drawing primarily from, the book of Isaiah.”¹⁵⁶ Ross Wagner has noted in particular three texts from Isaiah which Paul uses to anchor his apostolic ministry to the Gentiles: Isa 52:7 (Rom 10:15); Isa 53:1 (Rom 10:16); and Isa 52:15 (Rom 15:21).¹⁵⁷ With respect to these texts, Wagner acknowledges,

The manner in which Paul uses these quotations suggests that this section of Isaiah [Isa 52-53] has exercised a profound and formative influence on his conception of apostolic ministry. Paul finds in Isaiah a prefiguration or pre-announcement of his own proclamation of the gospel of Christ to Jew and Gentile alike, wherever Christ is not yet known.¹⁵⁸

Clearly Isaiah has had a major influence on Paul’s view of Gentile inclusion.

With this basic change in Paul’s outlook, it is a short leap to his extraordinary declaration of his ministry to the Gentiles in Rom 15:15-16 where he writes,

I have written you quite boldly on some points, as if to remind you of them again, because of the grace God gave me to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles with the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God, so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

¹⁵⁵ Douglas Oss, “A Note on Paul’s Use of Isaiah,” *BBR* 2 (1992), 106.

¹⁵⁶ Oss, “A Note on Paul’s Use of Isaiah,” 106.

¹⁵⁷ J. Ross Wagner, “The Heralds of Isaiah and the Mission of Paul,” in *Jesus and the Suffering Servant, Isaiah 53 and Christian Origins* (ed. William Bellinger, Jr. and William R. Farmer, Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1998), 194.

¹⁵⁸ Wagner, “The Heralds of Isaiah,” 194.

In these verses we see Paul, a devout Israelite, convinced of his divine mandate to present believing Gentiles as an offering to God just as was prophesied in Isa 66:19-21.¹⁵⁹ Paul has identified his own apostleship, the core of his ministry, with Gentile inclusion.¹⁶⁰ Despite his consecration to preach to the Gentiles, Paul continued, without abandoning hope (i.e., Rom 9-11) to witness to Christ as Messiah to his fellow Israelites, the ancestors of Abraham and his promises (e.g., 1 Cor 9:19-23).¹⁶¹ In Isaiah, Paul discovered a compelling justification and motivation for his open orientation toward Gentiles which represents the positive extreme of first century Jewish ambivalence to Gentile inclusion.

In addition to Paul's reflections on and commitment to Gentile inclusion, he also addressed the issue of the *Parousia's* delay. We will show later in our study that Paul himself was one of the influential personalities in the early Christian movement who connected the delay of the *Parousia* with Gentile inclusion. However, for now, we must be satisfied to observe that within Paul himself the sense of ambivalence toward Gentile inclusion exists, though it is profoundly tilted toward its positive extreme.

B. Accounting for the Ambivalence to Gentile Inclusion in Jesus and his Earliest Successors

¹⁵⁹ Lietaert Peerbolte, *Paul the Missionary*, 247, writes, "In Paul's view we find a fusion of the expectation of the gathering of the dispersed Jews from among the Gentiles, as found in Isaiah 66, and the tradition of the eschatological 'conversion' of Gentiles, found in e.g. *Psalms of Solomon* 17. At the time he wrote his letter to the Romans, Paul recognized his own ministry in the description of Isaiah 66:20. His perception of what he was doing did, however, lead Paul to change the purport of that verse. He did not see himself as the one who brought about the gathering of the dispersed Jews, but as the servant bringing the Gentiles themselves as an offering. Paul obviously transforms the traditional expectation of the eschatological gathering of all Israel to the idea of a gathering of Gentiles as an eschatological offering before the Lord: it is only in Paul's words that the Gentiles themselves form the offering."

¹⁶⁰ Dunn, *Partings of the Ways*, 161, notes, "More important for us here, Paul understood the appearance as a commissioning for apostleship *to the Gentiles* [emphasis his]. For him being an apostle always meant, so far as we can tell, 'apostle to the Gentiles' (Rom. 11. 13); hence the 'in order that' of Gal. 1.16 (just cited). It is most unlikely that Paul ever thought of himself as an apostle (in some general, unspecific sense) and then later on concluded that his apostleship was to the Gentiles. That would be quite at odds with his concept of apostleship, as a particular commissioning (cf. especially I Cor. 9.1-2; Gal. 2.8; II Cor. 10.13-16)."

¹⁶¹ Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary*, 306.

What can we say about this profound ambivalence toward Gentile inclusion that we witness time and time again in the historical record of first century Judaism? It would seem that some mechanism would be necessary to manage the tension between these two divergent attitudes toward the inclusion of Gentiles in the people of God. One promising possibility is what some authors have referred to as “Representative Universalism” and the related concept of “Restoration Theology.”

Representative Universalism argues that the lack of interest of Jesus and his earliest successors to the inclusion of the Gentiles had nothing to do with their attitude to the Gentiles per se; it had everything to do with their belief that the Gentiles would receive God’s grace in and through a religiously vital Israel. Munck summarizes this concept well:

There still remains to be considered the attitude of the earliest church to the Gentiles. It took the same viewpoint as Jesus, namely, representative universalism, and must therefore have regarded missionary work among the Gentiles as inessential. If Israel could be saved, God would also save the Gentiles. It would therefore seem to be bad strategy to waste energy in converting Gentiles when Israel’s conversion would be the decisive event in the history of salvation.¹⁶²

In essence, Jesus saw Israel as the key to Gentile inclusion, “Jesus saw the immediate task as that of creating such a community within Israel, in the faith that it would transform the life of his own people, and that a transformed Israel would transform the world.”¹⁶³

The payoff of “representative universalism” is that it is able to account for the fact that although Jesus and at least some of his immediate successors seemed to have little interest in Gentile inclusion, they paved the way for others whose ministry would focus on the Gentiles. Although Jesus didn’t minister to the Gentiles, he understood his own ministry in light of the OT

¹⁶² J. Munck, “Israel and the Gentiles in the New Testament,” in *Bulletin—Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950), 32.

¹⁶³ T. W. Manson, *Only to the House of Israel, Jesus and the Non-Jews* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), 23-24.

texts which referred “to the hope and desire that Israel should bring the knowledge of the true God to the Gentile peoples, and should prevail upon them to serve Him aright.”¹⁶⁴ So, when Paul, Barnabas and others involved in the Antioch church appear in Jerusalem, the pillars of Jewish Christianity gratefully accept the success of Gentile ministry (within the context of OT prophecy) and refuse to unduly burden it with legalistic stipulations (Acts 15:1-35).¹⁶⁵ Representative universalism allows us to account for the scheme of “First the Jews, then the Gentiles” since the offer of salvation for the Jews was a precondition for Gentile inclusion.¹⁶⁶ Thus, the framework of representative universalism accounts for the tension inherent in the ambivalence of first century Judaism to Gentile inclusion.

Yet another related attempt to account for the ambivalence toward Gentile inclusion in first century Judaism (especially as it comes to expression in Jesus and his earliest successors) is the concept of “Restoration.” According to the concept of “Restoration,” Jesus’ ministry, like the Prophets before him, was to bring restoration to the people of Israel. E. P. Sanders writes, “Most of the things which we know about Jesus with virtually complete certainty fit him rather neatly into the category of a prophet of Jewish restoration.”¹⁶⁷ Jesus taught his successors the need and

¹⁶⁴ Cadoux, *The Historical Mission*, 161.

¹⁶⁵ Munck, “Israel and the Gentiles in the New Testament,” 32: “But when Paul and the others from the mission to the Gentiles appear in Jerusalem, the leaders of the mission to the Jews are willing to acknowledge that this new idea is from God. They do not show an incomprehensible tolerance because they are in no way particularists who believe that the Gospel is not intended for the Gentiles. But they show understanding of something which in their opinion should only come later, and as a consequence of their own work among the Jews and they will not deny that it is the call of God. Thus two missions come into being, united in one church, Peter’s mission among the Jews, and Paul’s among the Gentiles.” See also Bornkamm, “End Expectation and the Church in Matthew,” 54.

¹⁶⁶ Ferdinand Hahn writes: “This is a matter of recognizing the priority of the choice of Israel—a priority that is taken into account in the Church’s mission, too. The phrase ‘first to the Jews’ which Paul uses so frequently has its root here, and was adopted but not created by him. The fact that it could be understood in various ways will be shown in later sections. Here we must point out that not only Paul but other New Testament writers adopted this principle, especially Matthew and Luke; in Acts it became so much a formal pattern that Paul is not allowed to go to the Gentiles till he has been rebuffed by the Jews.” Hahn, *Mission*, 75.

¹⁶⁷ Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 323.

importance of the restoration of Israel.¹⁶⁸ Thus, after Easter, “What survived . . . was a movement which followed more-or-less traditional Jewish expectations about the end. The end was at hand, or was in the process of being realized, and it was time to turn to the Lord and his law.”¹⁶⁹ As Israel was being restored, the natural consequence was the inclusion of the Gentiles in the eschaton.

In his writings about Jesus, Judaism and the Gentile inclusion, Michael Bird has been most consistent in applying the concept of Restoration (as developed by Sanders) to first century Judaism of Jesus and his successors. Bird argues that,

Jesus’ intention was to renew and restore Israel, so that a restored Israel would extend God’s salvation to the world. Since this restoration was already being realized in Jesus’ ministry, it was becoming possible for the Gentiles to share in the benefits of Israel’s restoration. Furthermore, Jesus understood himself and his followers as the beginning of the new temple and the vanguard of the restored Israel who would appropriate for themselves the mission of Israel and the temple in being a light to the nations. Hence, a Gentile mission is implied in the aims and intentions of Jesus and was pursued in a transformed context by members of the early Christian movement.¹⁷⁰

It is not surprising therefore that Jesus was ambivalent toward the Gentiles because he considered himself to be *an envoy sent to the house of Israel*. Michael Bird writes, “The historical Jesus went to Israel for no reason other than he was a prophet sent to Israel. However the Gentiles may figure into Jesus’ aims and intentions, they must clearly be subordinated to his overarching concern to gather ‘the lost sheep of the house of Israel’ (Mt. 10.5-6; 15.24).”¹⁷¹ But, the fact that Jesus understood his mission as only to Israel didn’t undermine his concern for the Gentiles. If we understand the importance that Jesus placed on Israel as the covenant people of

¹⁶⁸ Dunn, *Christianity in the Making*, 1:91.

¹⁶⁹ Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 323.

¹⁷⁰ Bird, *Jesus and the Origin of Gentile Mission*, 3.

¹⁷¹ Michael Bird, “Jesus and the Gentiles after Jeremias: Patterns and Prospects,” *CBR* 4.1 (2005), 97.

God, “it becomes apparent that the renewal of Israel implied nothing less than the renewal of Israel’s mission which was to be the vehicle through which God’s saving power would be manifest to all the nations of the earth.”¹⁷² Jesus’ sometimes critical views of Gentiles and his priority for ministry to Israel reflect not a general attitude of disdain for the Gentiles, but rather the desire to call Israel to a restored relationship with YHWH so that a restored Israel would be the vessel by which the Gentile nations would encounter God. On the other hand, Jesus’ often critical views of his Jewish contemporaries reflect not a priority on Gentile inclusion, but rather “represent a challenge and call for Israel to be Israel, otherwise Israel’s vocation shall be transferred to a remnant within Israel. God’s purposes would be fulfilled, if not by national Israel, than through a renewed Israel that Jesus was forming.”¹⁷³

The concept of Restoration fits very well with the data regarding Jesus and his earliest successors’ ambivalence toward Gentile inclusion. It explains why in the decades after Easter, Jesus’ immediate successors could focus almost entirely on ministry to Israel, while at the same time accepting fellow Jewish Christians whose ministry was almost entirely focused on the Gentiles.¹⁷⁴ The only point of contention was to what extent Gentile converts needed to follow the customs and laws of first century Judaism--a question to be expected when non-Jews were being integrated into what, until that time, had been an almost exclusively Jewish community.¹⁷⁵

C. The Eschatological Pilgrimage of the Nations

A final explanation for the ambivalence toward Gentile inclusion in first century Judaism is the concept of the Eschatological Pilgrimage of the Nations. In our discussion of the centripetal

¹⁷² Bird, *Jesus and the Origin of Gentile Mission*, 56.

¹⁷³ Bird, *Jesus and the Origin of Gentile Mission*, 130-131.

¹⁷⁴ See Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 220.

¹⁷⁵ Schnabel, “Jesus and the Beginnings of the Mission to the Gentiles,” 40.

nature of first century Judaism, we noted that the concept of the Eschatological Pilgrimage is the primary motif for the inclusion of the Gentiles in the OT. The idea of the Eschatological Pilgrimage fits very well with both Representative Universalism and Restoration since the pilgrimage always occurs at the behest of YHWH after Zion (and Israel by extension) has been restored and renewed by God.¹⁷⁶ This pilgrimage was prefigured by the voyage of observant Jews to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast days and the accompanying literature developed (such as the *Psalms of Ascent*) to sustain such undertakings.¹⁷⁷ Previously we noted the considerable presence of the Eschatological Pilgrimage in both the OT¹⁷⁸ and the extra-canonical (apocryphal and pseudepigraphical) materials.¹⁷⁹

In the NT as well there are allusions to the eschatological pilgrimage, the foremost of which is what we will call the “East/West Saying” found in the “Q” tradition recorded by Matt 8:11-12//Luke13:28-29.¹⁸⁰ Since this saying has been connected with the theme of the rejection of the Jews in the early Christian tradition,¹⁸¹ it will be dealt with more fully in Chapter Three. However, we note that not all commentators have agreed that this saying, at least, in its earliest

¹⁷⁶ Wilson writes, “The idea is that of the nations’ pilgrimage to Zion in the last days, when they will witness the glory of Yahweh mediated in and expressed through his relationship with Israel.” Wilson, *The Gentiles*, 2-3.

¹⁷⁷ Vogels, *God’s Universal Covenant*, 118. See also Stuhlmacher, “Matt 28:16-20,” 28-29.

¹⁷⁸ Jeremias writes: “In all the passages of the Old Testament, without exception, in which reference is made to the eschatological pilgrimage of the Gentiles, the goal of the pilgrimage is the scene of God’s revelation of himself, Zion, the holy Mountain of God. From this it is to be inferred that the movement is always thought of as ‘centripetal’, the Gentiles will not be evangelized where they dwell, but will be summoned to the holy Mount by the divine epiphany. Zion is always the appointed centre for their gathering . . . The fact is that wherever the Old Testament is concerned with the redemption of the Gentiles, it guarantees them a share in the revelation vouchsafed to Israel, and inclusion in God’s redeemed community.” Jeremias, *Jesus’ Promise*, 60.

¹⁷⁹ See Jeremias, *Jesus’ Promise*, 61-62 and Wilson, *The Gentiles*, 2.

¹⁸⁰ Bird, *Jesus and the Origins of Gentile Mission*, 92.

¹⁸¹ Witherington III, *Jesus, Paul and the End of the World*, 137-138.

form, spoke of Gentiles at all.¹⁸² Furthermore, the entire literary motif of the Eschatological Banquet (which we will treat in Chapter Seven when we study the parable of the Wedding Feast/Great Banquet), is intimately woven into the Eschatological Pilgrimage.¹⁸³

We should note too that not all references to the Eschatological Pilgrimage are complementary or positive toward Gentiles. Thompson notes,

Although the prophetic and apocalyptic traditions of Judaism speak of the pilgrimage of the nations to Zion or the conversion of the Gentiles to the faith of Israel, it would be a mistake to say that the expectation of the conversion of the Gentiles was a general consensus, especially in apocalyptic circles. There is another tradition, according to which the nations make the final assault on Zion and trample it under foot. This tradition is seen especially in Ezekiel 38; Joel 4:9-17; Zechariah 12-14; Daniel 8:10-13.¹⁸⁴

Except where the NT is directly referencing the more “negative” pole in the Eschatological Pilgrimage (e.g., the use of Ezek 38 in Rev 20:7-10), the Pilgrimage almost always has the positive sense of the inclusion of Gentile nations into the worship and blessings of YHWH.¹⁸⁵

As its name suggests, the idea of the Eschatological Pilgrimage was firmly rooted in the apocalyptic context of the final acts of God in history. C. K. Barret argues, “It [the Pilgrimage] would be in the strictest sense a matter of eschatology, not of ‘realized eschatology,’ but of that

¹⁸² See Dale Allison Jr., “Who Will Come from the East and the West? Observations on Matthew 8:11-12 - Luke 13:28-29,” *IBS* 11 (1989): 158-170. At least in the form and context communicated in Matt 8:11-12//Luke13:28-29, there is little doubt that the East/West saying refers to Gentiles.

¹⁸³ See Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 170-171.

¹⁸⁴ Thompson, “The Gentile Mission as an Eschatological Necessity,” 24.

¹⁸⁵ Beasley-Murray writes, “Perhaps we should recognize the simple fact that the tradition of the messianic feast, so movingly expressed in Isaiah 25:6ff., was accepted by Jesus as a fitting symbol of the kingdom of God. None of the accompaniments of the ‘pilgrimage of the nations’ is alluded to in our passage. Most notably, there is no mention of the defeat of the Gentiles or their subjection to Israel in the kingdom of God; rather, the nations are described as coming from all quarters of the world to participate in the feast of God with Israel’s founding fathers, whereas Jesus tells the Jews that they will be excluded from the feasts. The Gentiles will not be forced to serve the Jews but will in fact be given the privileges that the Jews considered their exclusive heritage while the Jews are expelled from the kingdom. The thrust of the saying, therefore, is a devastating declaration of judgment on Israel.” G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans: 1985), 170-171.

ultimate future which however near, lies beyond the present span of time.”¹⁸⁶ However, as the effort to include Gentiles met with increased success, it seems that the Early Christian movement viewed the Eschatological Pilgrimage as “realized” and therefore it does not receive the same emphasis as it did in the work of Jesus and his most immediate successors.¹⁸⁷ In essence, in the Early Christian movement’s efforts to include Gentiles, the eschatological work of God to assemble the nations at Mount Zion was in the process of fulfillment.

The concept of Eschatological Pilgrimage, which nicely compliments Representative Universalism and Restoration, does much to explain the ambivalence of first century Judaism toward Gentile inclusion, especially as expressed in Jesus and his earliest successors. While not opposed to Gentile participation in Israel on principle, many first century Jewish religious leaders like Jesus and his successors would simply have demurred that (1) the impetus for Gentile participation *must come from the Gentiles themselves* and (2) that such impetus would definitively occur *only at the end of time*. Perhaps the conviction that Jesus’ death and resurrection signified a new eschatological age (as, for example, Oscar Cullmann suggests in *Christ and Time*),¹⁸⁸ was one of the motivations that turned the Eschatological Pilgrimage’s inherently centripetal orientation toward Gentile inclusion into a full-fledged centrifugal Gentile mission initiated by the risen Christ in Matt 28, Luke 24 and Acts 1. If so, then the delay of the Parousia (construed as a reason for Gentile inclusion) would have reinforced the early Christian movement’s tendency to seek out Gentiles.

V. Conclusion

¹⁸⁶ Barrett, “The Gentile Mission,” 67.

¹⁸⁷ Best, “The Revelation,” 20-22.

¹⁸⁸ Cullman, *Christ in Time*, 158.

The goal of this chapter has been to set the stage for our analysis of the literary motifs of growth, absent master and wedding banquet which connect Gentile inclusion with the delay of the *Parousia*. One of the factors in the adoption of these literary motifs into Jesus' Synoptic parables is the ambivalent attitude of first century Judaism toward Gentile inclusion. As the decades wore on after Easter and the Apostles' generation began to pass away, the early Christian movement had to decide whether including the Gentiles in its communities was warranted based on its memory and interpretation of the teachings of Jesus and his earliest successors.

Given the ambivalent attitude toward Gentiles in first century Judaism, their inclusion in the early Christian community created tension. We noted in Chapter Two that often Jews and Gentiles remained separate from one another and were at times even violently hostile to each other (e.g., the Jewish War, the Bar Kokhba revolt, and the disturbances in cities of the Jewish Diaspora like Alexandria and Antioch). On the other hand, we observed that some Gentiles participated in the socio-religious life of Israel as proselytes and God-fearers and that Jews actively sought out influential Gentile patrons to advocate for them before Rome and her proxies. We also witnessed the fundamental tension in the attitude toward Gentiles in Hebrew Scripture. Hebrew Scripture anticipated the eschatological ingathering of the Gentiles by YHWH, the Lord of all the nations. But, it also condemned the Gentile nations for their oppression of Israel, their perceived immorality, and their worship of idols. Finally we saw how extraordinary early Christian figures like Paul and Jesus were affected by the profound ambivalence to Gentiles that characterized Judaism of the first-century.

Sometimes hostile toward Gentiles, sometimes willing to tolerate their presence, and sometimes even willing to embrace them, first century Judaism provided no one coherent answer

to the “Gentile Question.” For this reason, Gentile inclusion was one of “the most crucial questions facing first century Judaism.”¹⁸⁹ Despite all the mixed feelings, there were enough positive images of Gentiles in first century Judaism to spur the early Christian movement to confess that its Lord had indeed made room in his kingdom for the nations. When the early Christian movement started settling the “Gentile Question” in the final decades of the first century, it appropriated the literary motifs which we will see in the Synoptic parables in Chapters Five through Seven as a justification for its perspective.

However, before we go on to these literary motifs, there remains one final contributing factor to Gentile inclusion in the early Christian movement which we must address: the rejection of Jesus and his message by many leaders of first century Judaism. For a movement already struggling with a longer-than-hoped-for period of time before the eschatological consummation and feelings of ambivalence as to whether an outsider group like the Gentiles should be admitted into their ranks, the negative reception of Jesus and his message by the Jewish leadership (and by extension the Jewish nation) was profoundly destabilizing. It was at the intersection of these three factors (delay, ambivalence toward the Gentiles, and rejection by Jewish leadership), that the impetus for Gentile inclusion (and the literary motifs that reflect it) during post-Easter period came into existence.

¹⁸⁹ Bird, *Jesus and the Gentiles after Jeremias*, 95.

CHAPTER THREE

THE REJECTION OF THE EARLY CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT BY THE LEADERS OF FIRST CENTURY JUDAISM AND ITS EFFECTS ON GENTILE INCLUSION

In the two previous introductory chapters, we have been laying the foundation of our argument that the delay of the *Parousia* was a key motivation for the early Christian movement to include Gentiles in its preaching and communities. While the three literary motifs (growth, absent master, and wedding feast) are the primary data points in our argument, we must consider other texts and factors that contributed to the inclusion of the Gentiles in the early Christian communities. In the final introductory chapter, we will show that the rejection of the message of the early Christian movement by the Palestinian Jewish leadership was a significant factor leading to the inclusion of the Gentiles in addition to the delay of the *Parousia*. In fact, we will see that the theme of rejection is insolubly bound up with the *Parousia*'s delay and Gentile inclusion in the parables of the Weeds, the Wedding Feast/Great Banquet, and the Talents/Minas in Chapters Five, Six, and Seven. Methodology, definitions, and explanations of the significant terms we will use in our discussion below (e.g., "first century Judaism," "Jew," etc.) can be found in the preface of this study.

I. Introduction

There is no doubt that Christianity, in its earliest stages, was a Jewish faith held almost exclusively by ethnically Jewish people. However, early Christian literature suggests that this situation began changing in the decades following Easter. For example, Acts suggests the Jerusalem church allowed Gentiles to join the ranks of early Christianity without fully complying with the more onerous demands of *Torah* like circumcision (Acts 15:29-21).¹ As we have seen in our short reflection on Paul in the previous chapter, by the second half of the first century, the door was fully open to Gentiles in many early Christian communities since ethnically-specific

¹ See Geza Vermes, "From Jewish to Gentile, How the Jesus Movement Became Christianity," *BAR* 38.6 (2012), 54.

elements of *Torah*-observance were no longer a prerequisite of faith.² However, the transition from the early Christian movement as a segment of first century Judaism to Christianity as a Gentile religion would not be complete until after two violent wars (the Jewish War of A.D. 66-72/3 and the Bar Kokhba War of A.D. 132-136), fought brutally between the Roman military and Palestinian Jewry.³ Afterwards, isolated pockets of Jewish Palestinian Christians survived such as the so-called Nazarenes⁴ who lived mostly east of the Jordan Valley⁵ and the Jewish-Christian group called the Ebionites.⁶ Several ancient texts outside of the NT witness to the hostility

² Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 2:931.

³ Vermes, "From Jewish to Gentile," 78, writes, "After Hadrian suppressed the second Jewish revolt in 135 C.E., the decline of Jewish Christianity began. Justin Martyr (executed in 165 C.E.) proudly notes that in his day non-Jews largely outnumbered Jewish members of the church (*First Apology*). Thereafter, Judeo-Christianity, the elder sister, adhering to the observance of the Mosaic precepts and combining them with a primitive type of faith in Jesus, progressively became a fringe phenomenon."

⁴ The term "Nazarenes" was used as a general reference to Christians in Greek and Latin literature in the first and second centuries since Jesus himself was from Nazareth (Matt 2:23; Mark 14:67; 16:6; Acts 24:5). However, the term was used for much longer to refer to Christians generally in Jewish literature. Epiphanius and Jerome (and later writers depending on them) used the term to denote a specific Jewish-Christian group. See Petri Luomanen, "Nazarenes," in *A Companion to Second-Century Christian "Heretics"* (ed. Antti Marjanen and Petri Luomanen; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 281-282.

⁵ The account of the establishment of the Jewish-Christian church which fled from Jerusalem to Pella in the Transjordan during the Jewish War can be found in Eusebius Pamphili's *Hist. eccl.* 3.5.2: "But the people of the church in Jerusalem had been commanded by a revelation, vouchsafed to approved men there before the war, to leave the city and to dwell in a certain town of Perea called Pella." Epiphanius, a fourth century resident of Palestine and bishop of Cyprus also provides an account in two of his existing works, *Pan.* 29.7.7-8, and *Treatise on Weights and Measures* (ch. 15). See Craig Koester, "The Origin and Significance of the Flight to Pella Tradition," *CBQ* 51 (1989), 91-92. Perhaps Luke 21:20-21 is another such a reference to this escape. The historicity of the Pella escape is debated among scholars. However, Koester, "The Origin," 105, argues that the Pella flight tradition in Eusebius and Epiphanius are independent and based on solid first century evidence. Jozef Verheyden, "The Flight of the Christians to Pella," *ETL* 66.4 (1990): 368-384, argues that flight to Pella tradition is an adaptation of a motif about the deliverance of the Jerusalem church from the disaster of A.D. 70. Luomanen locates several Jewish-Christian groups in Syrian Beroea, Bashan, and Pella in the second through fifth centuries. However, he doubts that the group known to Jerome and Epiphanius as the Nazarenes inhabited these areas. Instead Epiphanius connected the Nazarenes to these areas because he knew of other Jewish-Christian groups inhabiting them like the Ebionites. See Luomanen, "Nazarenes," 290-291. In the end, Luomanen doubts that a separate sub-group of Jewish Christianity called the Nazarenes ever existed. Rather, he argues that the Nazarenes were a foil created by Epiphanius and used to denounce law-observant Jewish-Christianity. Luomanen, "Nazarenes," 309-312.

⁶ Ray Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity: From the End of the New Testament Period until Its Disappearance in the Fourth Century* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1988), 108-109. Pritz argues that the Nazarenes, a Jewish sect tracing their origin to the Jerusalem church and confessing the deity of Christ, fled Jerusalem to Pella in the Transjordan during the time of the first Jewish War. Later the Ebionites broke away from this group because of Christological disputes. The Nazarene sect was in possession of a Hebrew-language gospel, known today by fragmentary evidence called "The Gospel of the Hebrews" of which Saint Jerome mentions. Because of the refusal of the Nazarenes to side with the Jewish Bar-Kokhba revolutionaries and because of subsequent Roman military

between the Jewish leadership and the early Christian movement.⁷ This drastic change of character in the early Christian movement was a process and did not take place all at one time.⁸

In fact, one of the first appearances of the concept of Gentile Christianity as separate from Judaism comes from Ignatius of Antioch dating to A.D. 108.⁹ Yet some scholars have forcefully argued the presentation of Jewish hostility toward Jesus and his message from the side of Pharisaic Judaism is really a later Christian addition.¹⁰ In the mind of such scholars, the NT witness of Jewish opposition against Jesus and the early Christian community is simply the later perspective of the Gentile church being read back into the life of the earliest Christian communities.¹¹ David Flusser writes,

It is also generally accepted that Jesus did not preach a new religion. His debates with the Pharisees, even according to the version of the synoptic Gospels, were not apt to arouse anger and enmity on their side, and his special way of interpreting the nature of Judaism was nevertheless not revolutionary and

interventions in Judea, the Nazarenes were further scattered into isolated areas of Syria. The sect ceased to exist by the end of fourth century. Bastiaan Van Elderen, "Early Christianity in the Transjordan," *TynBul* 45.1 (1994), 107-108, affirms the immigration of Jerusalem Christians as likely but impossible to ultimately prove, "Although the evidence may not be fully conclusive, nevertheless some migrations of Jerusalem Christians to Transjordan in the first and second centuries certainly seem suggested by the data and no doubt contributed to the rise of certain Jewish Christian movements in Transjordan." Van Elderen, "Early Christianity," 110-111, cites two Jewish apocryphal gospels as being produced by the Transjordan Jewish-Christian community: the Gospel of the Nazaraeans and the Gospel of the Ebionites.

⁷ A good example is the "Twelfth Benediction" or the *Birkat Ha-Minim*, recited in Jewish synagogues during the early church period. The Twelfth Benediction is actually a curse directed against heretics, or *minim*, "For the apostates let there be no hope. And let the arrogant government be speedily uprooted in our days. Let the *nozerim* [presumably, Nazarenes, or Jewish Christians] and the *minim* [heretics] be destroyed in a moment." The reference to *nozerim* is secondary and only present in two Egyptian texts. See David Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1988), 638. However, Justin Martyr, a second century Christian apologist makes reference to "cursing in your [the Jews'] synagogues those that believe on Christ." See Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 16. Setting aside the question of the Nazarenes, there can be little doubt that in the decades following the death of Jesus, the heretics that Jews condemned in Twelfth Benediction were most likely Christians, one of the most numerous sectarian groups within first-century Judaism. See James Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways*, 289.

⁸ Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways*, xi.

⁹ Philippa Townsend, "Who Were the First Christians," in *Heresy and Identity in Late Antiquity* (Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 119; ed. Eduard Iricinschi and Holger Zellentin; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 212.

¹⁰ Sanders writes, "I am one of a growing number of scholars who doubt that there were any substantial points of opposition between Jesus and the Pharisees (that is, with the Pharisees in particular, as distinct from the rest of Jewish Palestine)." Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 264.

¹¹ Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 265.

centrifugal. Had it been so, it would have been stressed by the authors of the New Testament writings, who wished to separate the new faith from the mother religion.¹²

Flusser, in fact, goes so far as to argue that an original Aramaic Gospel (the lost Gospel of the Hebrews) contained no evidence of conflict between the Jewish leadership and the nascent early Christian movement and any material indicating such controversy was added by the Greek-speaking Gentile-Christian community in the final redactional layer.¹³ Other influential scholars, like E. P. Sanders, make the more moderate claim that while Jesus' core convictions were not offensive to first century Judaism (contra the position that first century Judaism was a "legalistic" religion and that Jesus preached against "external legalism"), his manner of criticism, especially with regard to the Temple, brought him into sharp conflict with the Jewish ruling authorities.¹⁴

Here we must make two notes regarding the proposition that there really was no significant conflict between the first century Jewish leadership and the early Christian community. First, we note that, as mentioned in our preface, it is not our intention to delve into the controversy surrounding the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus and adjudicate as to whether there was a *historical* conflict between him and the Jewish leaders. Our interest is in literary testimony originating in the early Christian community (which clearly presents conflict between Jesus, his earliest successors, and the Jewish leadership). Secondly, the proposition advanced by many scholars that Jesus and his earliest successors had no real conflict with the Palestinian Jewish leadership reflects not so much the historical reality of the early Christian movement, but rather two

¹² Flusser, *Judaism*, 619.

¹³ Flusser, *Judaism*, 552.

¹⁴ See Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 270-293. On page 291 Sanders writes, "I find no substantial conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees."

justifiable concerns: (1) a critique of the dominant Christian opinion that Jesus focused only the “interior” and “meaningful” aspects of *Torah* as opposed to the “externalism” of first century Judaism, and (2) the concern to avoid reigniting the fires of anti-Semitism which have been stoked by Christian theologians in the last 1,500 years.¹⁵ Geza Vermes vividly writes, “In the shadow of the chimneys of the death-camps, anti-Judaism, even academic anti-Judaism, has become not only unfashionable but obscene.”¹⁶ As I noted in my preface, I have no desire to return to the lamentable obscenity of anti-Semitism or academic anti-Judaism.

However, that does not mean that we proverbially “stick our heads in the sand” with regard to the conflict between the early Christian movement and the first century Jewish leadership. Though the dispute between the early Christian movement and the first century Jewish leadership was essentially *inter-familial* (as both sides were religiously and culturally Jewish), the conflict was significant nonetheless. The early Christian claim that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah and its redefinition of *Israel* to include those who did not keep *Torah* (such as the Gentiles) were serious challenges to the first century Jewish religious establishment. Bird adeptly states, “The umbrage prompted by Jesus’ actions and teachings in relation to *Torah* derived from a radical challenge to his interlocutors as to what it meant to be faithful to God in the light of the dawning eschatological age.”¹⁷ According to James Dunn, already by the seventies the predecessors of what would become Rabbinical Judaism were “taking a deliberate step to mark themselves off from other claimants to the broad heritage of pre-70 Judaism.”¹⁸ One of those

¹⁵ Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways*, 188.

¹⁶ Geza Vermes, *Jesus and the World of Judaism* (London: SCM Press, 1988), 67.

¹⁷ Michael Bird, “Jesus as a Law-Breaker” in *Who Do My Opponents Say That I Am?* (ed. Scot McKnight and Joseph B. Modica; London: T & T Clark, 2008), 6.

¹⁸ Dunn, *Partings of the Ways*, 289. Dunn identifies the greatest cause for the process of breaking away from first-century Judaism as the early Christian conception of Jesus Christ: “And not least, for ‘the Jews’ who reaffirmed the unity of God in traditional terms and who turned their backs on all attempts to explore the boundaries

claimants was the early Christian movement, which during most of the first century was effectively one among many diverse expressions of Judaism. While the goal of this chapter is not to explain the reasons why the separation was happening, we can simply summarize by adopting James Dunn's argument that the quarrel between the early Christian movement and other expressions of first century Judaism was over the foundational concepts of Christology, the role of *Torah*, the theology of the Temple, and the identity of the chosen people.¹⁹ Simply, the essential problem was that "for the majority of Jews, even the Christology contained in the New Testament was clearly unacceptable, not only because such a belief was unusual, but also because the whole cosmic drama of Christ and the superhuman nature of the task of Christ was in disharmony with the Jewish belief in the God who is One and whose name is One."²⁰ The goal of the rest of this chapter will simply be to note several texts where the rejection of the early Christian movement by the first century Jewish leadership is connected to Gentile inclusion. I have chosen to analyze these texts in Chapter Three because they are paradigmatic of the connection between the early Christian movement's experience of Jewish leadership's rejection and its effort to include Gentiles. In our study of the parables in Chapters Five through Seven, we will discover the motif of rejection insolubly bound to the themes of the delay of the *Parousia* and Gentile inclusion, especially the parables of the Wedding Feast (Chapter Six) and Talents/Minas (Chapter Seven). Thus, the analysis of the texts below will lay the groundwork for our exegesis. In Chapter Three we will briefly examine the parable of the Wicked Tenants (Mark 12:1-2//Matt 21:33-46//Luke 20:9-19), the Synoptic episode of Jesus at the Temple (Matt 21:12-

of that axiom, the Christian affirmation of Jesus as the divine Word/Wisdom-become-flesh was the last straw; such no longer had right or place within the synagogue. *Here we may speak of a particularly crucial parting of the ways* [emphasis his]." Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways*, 301-302.

¹⁹ See Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways*, xxvi, 24-26.

²⁰ Flusser, *Judaism*, 620.

16//Mark 11:15-18//Luke 19:45-47), the “East/West” saying (Matt 8:11-12//Luke 13:28-29), the parable of the Shut Door (Luke 13:22-30), and Rom 11:25-32.

II. The Parable of the Tenants: Mark 12:1-12//Matt 21:33-46//Luke 20:9-19//Gos. Thom. 65

The parable of the Tenants, a triple tradition parable also found in the *Gos. Thom.* 65, is an extraordinarily complex and rich expression of the tension between the first century Jewish leadership’s rejection of the early Christian movement’s message and the embracing of it by Gentiles. We will make no attempt to analyze the entire parable, since much has been written about it which is peripheral to our interest, especially in regard to its relationship with Ps 118. Instead our interest lies in the connection between the Jewish leadership’s rejection of the early Christian movement and the resulting openness to the Gentiles evidenced in the parable.

In all three Synoptic Gospels, the parable nicely fits the “absent master” form which is so common amongst the eschatological parables (see Chapter Seven).²¹ Furthermore, all three place the parable in the context of the dispute between Jesus and the Jewish leadership which begins on the Temple Mount (see Mark 11:12-19//Matt 21:12-17//Luke 19:45-48).²² Finally, in all three Synoptic Gospels it is clear that the parable is aimed directly at the Jewish leadership, especially the Sadducees and teachers of Law (see Mark 11:27//Matt 21:23//Luke 20:2; Matt adds “Pharisees” in 21:5), who become Jesus’ primary interlocutors (and persecutors) during Passion Week.²³ According to the Synoptic Gospels, the negative reaction of the Jewish leaders (see Mark 12:12//Matt 21:45-46//Luke 20:19) confirms that they were indeed the target of Jesus’

²¹ See the parables of the Doorkeeper (Mark 13:34-37//Luke 12:35-38), the parable of the Ten Virgins (Matt 25:1-13), parable of the Wise and Foolish Servant (Matt 24:45-51//Luke 12:41-48), and the parable of the Talents/Minas (Matt 25:14-30//Luke 19:11-25).

²² Many commentators even make a connection between the tower which the master erects in his vineyard and the Jerusalem Temple. See Craig Evans, “On the Vineyard Parables,” *BZ* 28 (1984): 84-85.

²³ Klyne Snodgrass, *The Parable of the Wicked Tenants* (Tubingen: JCB Mohr, 1983), 45-46.

parable.²⁴ *Gos. Thom.* 65 presents a much simpler version of the parable of the Tenants which is linked with the parable of the Wedding Banquet much like Matthew. However, due to its gnostic tendency to despise wealth and commerce,²⁵ the parable of the Tenants in the *Gos. Thom.* reverses the point of the Synoptic parable (which castigates the tenants) and instead shows how a foolish vineyard owner loses his wealth.²⁶ For this reason, we will not use *Thomas*' version of the parable of the Tenants in our analysis.

One of the first questions we must ask is whether the parable of the Tenants has an eschatological component or whether it focuses exclusively on the early Christian community's historical experience of first century Jewish rejection of Jesus and his subsequent crucifixion. If the parable is eschatologically orientated, then the presence of the phrase "went away for a long time" (ἀπεδήμησεν χρόνους ἱκανούς) in Luke 20:9 would suggest the delay of the *Parousia* and force us to treat this parable with the Talents/Minas in our discussion of the "absent master" literary motif's connection between the delay and Gentile inclusion (Chapter Seven). Blomberg, Kümmel, and others argue that the phrase "a long time" in Luke 20:9 implies a reference to the delay of the *Parousia*, much like the reference of the master's voyage "to a far country" (εἰς χώραν μακράν) in the Lukan parable of the Minas.²⁷ In contrast, Marshall argues, "Allegorically, the 'long time' has been thought to reflect the delay of the *parousia*, but the reference, if any, is

²⁴ The fact that the Jewish leadership is the target for the criticism of the parable is theologically important according to Mattias Konradt, *Israel, the Church, and the Gentiles in the Gospel of Matthew* (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2014), 170; trans. of *Israel, Kirche und die Völker im Matthäusevangelium* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), "It is the chief priests and the elders of the people from 21.23 who are the focus of the criticism." Thus for Konradt the quarrel is between the Matthean community and the Jewish leadership. Nothing can be deduced about the final disposition of the Jewish people from this text.

²⁵ Note the final sentence in logion 64: "Businessmen and merchants will not enter the places of my father."

²⁶ Simon Gathercole, *The Gospel of Thomas; Introduction and Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 461. See also Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20*, 217-218. Using recent research into the Coptic manuscripts, Evans argues that in fact the description of the vineyard owner as "a good man" is a mistranslation. Instead, the man is a "lender" and the parable of the Tenants in the *Gos. Thom.* is about a usurer who loses everything to his unscrupulous tenants.

²⁷ See Kümmel, *Promise and Fulfillment*, 82 and Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables*, 88.

rather to the long period during and since the sending of the prophets, since there is no reference to the *parousia* or final judgment in the parable.”²⁸ This long period of time, not mentioned in Mark and Matthew, could also refer simply to the time needed to grow a newly planted vineyard or the fact that the owner lived far away.²⁹ In the absence of a clear eschatological allusion, Luke’s ἀπεδήμησεν χρόνους ἱκανούς in the parable of the Tenants cannot refer to the delay of the *Parousia*. Thus, the parable of Tenants addresses only the rejection of Jesus and his disciples by the Jewish leadership and not the rejection of the early Christian movement during the period of the *Parousia*’s delay.

Since we are probing the connection between the first century Jewish leadership’s rejection of the early Christian message and the subsequent inclusion of Gentiles, we must make an effort to understand the parable of the Tenants’ obvious allegorical character.³⁰ In our analysis, we need not concern ourselves with the provenance of the allegorical content of the parable of the Tenants (i.e., whether the allegory originates with Jesus or is a redactional addition of the Gospel writers) since we are not interested in tracing the development of the tradition.³¹ Instead, given the obvious allegorical nature of the parable as we have received it in the Synoptic texts, we must grapple with the identity of the following figures: the owner, the tenants, the vineyard, the servants, the son, and the “others” (ἄλλοι in Mark and Luke) or “a people” (ἔθνος in Matt) who receive the vineyard from its original tenants.³²

²⁸ I. H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* (NIGTC; Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1978), 728-729.

²⁹ Marshall, *Luke*, 728.

³⁰ Konradt, *Matthew*, 174.

³¹ Snodgrass, *The Parable*, 24-25.

³² J. Lyle Story, “Hope in the Midst of Tragedy (Isa 5:1-7; Matt 21:33-46 par),” *HBT* 31 (2009), 187.

The identity of the master as God is fairly straightforward in keeping with other NT and later rabbinical parables with a master as their main character.³³ Further evidence that master corresponds to God is the allusion to Isa 5, the Song of the Vineyard, where YHWH is the master.³⁴

Similarly we can easily deduce that the identity of the vineyard is the “people of God” or “Israel” due to the connection with Isa 5 where the vineyard is identified as Israel.³⁵ Thus, Evans notes, “The parable presupposes the identity of the vineyard with Israel.”³⁶

Other obvious deductions are the identities of the servants and the son. Based on common parabolic usage, Jesus’ hearers would have assumed that the servants of the master (God) had some unique relationship to him, such as prophets. Thus Snodgrass states, “It is probable that the servants would have caused Jewish listeners to think of the prophets or at least of some special representatives of God.”³⁷ The “son” in the parable of the Tenants is quite an interesting though readily understandable allegorical allusion, especially since Mark calls him “beloved” (ἀγαπητός) in 12:6 just as in the Markan baptismal narrative (1:11: ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός). If we set aside the question of the origin of the son in the allegory, it is obvious that “the son designated the final emissary from God, one who was in a unique relationship with God and to

³³ Edward H. Horne, “The Parable of the Tenants as Indictment,” *JSNT* 71 (1998), 113.

³⁴ John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew, A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 869. See especially Isa 5:7: “The vineyard of the Lord Almighty is the nation of Israel, and the people of Judah are the vines he delighted in.”

³⁵ Jane E. and Raymond R. Newell, “The Parable of the Wicked Tenants,” *NovT*, 14 (1972), 226-227. Gale A. Yee, “A Form Critical Study of Isaiah 5:1-7 as a Song and a Juridical Parable,” *CBQ* 43.1 (1981), 39, argues that Isaiah 5:1-7 is a parable addressed to Judah, “The Isaian text is a ‘song’ addressed to Judah who would be familiar with the usual content of songs, viz., the covenant between YHWH and his people.” Yee’s claim that Isaiah 5:1-7 refers to Judah has no bearing on our argument because at the time the parable of the Tenants was incorporated in Matt. Judah no longer existed as political entity.

³⁶ Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20*, 230.

³⁷ Snodgrass, *The Parable*, 78.

whom the vineyard rightly belonged.”³⁸ Also, in the Matthean (21:39) and the Lukan (20:15) versions, the son is killed “outside the city walls” just as the historical crucifixion of Jesus.³⁹ Thus, the son, or Jesus Christ, represents the final and most important of the master’s representatives, the heir and the recipient of the most violent treatment of all his predecessors.⁴⁰

The real difficulty in understanding the allegory is in the identity of the tenants and “others” (ἄλλοι in Mark and Luke) or “a people” (ἔθνος in Matt) who receive the vineyard. Since we intend to show the connection between the rejection of the Jewish leadership with the inclusion of the Gentiles, these two allegorical images are of utmost importance.

Historically, many scholars have tended to view the allegorical nature of the parable of the Tenants as a secondary creation and so have easily and quickly deduced that the tenants represent Israel and the “others” represent Gentiles entering into the church.⁴¹ Thus, the Gentile church replaces the race of Israel as God’s chosen people.⁴² However, even without resorting to historical-critical deductions, this explanation struggles to answer the question: “If the tenants represent Israel and the ‘others’ represent the Gentiles, then what does the vineyard represent?” In order to answer this question, we may assume that the tenants represent not Israel, but Israel’s leaders.⁴³ Snodgrass argues this point, “Most scholars have agreed that the tenants represent the Jewish leaders, since each Gospel writer indicates that these persons knew that the parable was

³⁸ Snodgrass, *The Parable*, 87.

³⁹ Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 621.

⁴⁰ Evans, *Mark 8:27-16:20*, 230.

⁴¹ Wilson, *The Gentiles*, 29. See also Story, “Hope in the Midst of Tragedy,” 186.

⁴² See also Jeremias, *Promise*, 24-25.

⁴³ Konradt, *Matthew*, 175, finds this point especially important as he opposes the concept of the replacement of Israel with the Gentiles, “To summarize, if the vineyard stands for Israel, the parable would not be directed against Israel but against her leadership. This line of interpretation has become increasingly significant in most recent Matthean scholarship.”

directed against them. To suggest the tenants are a reference to all of Israel is an error.”⁴⁴ This solution provides many benefits. First of all, it solves the dilemma of the role of Israel in salvation history. Nowhere in the NT does God entirely remove Israel from his salvific purview. Instead he preserves a “righteous remnant.”⁴⁵ Second, it was customary for the prophets and Jesus (as far as is reported in the early Christian literature) to withhold the strongest reproofs for the leaders of the people in times of judgment (Matt 23:13-29//Luke 11:42-52, cf. Jer 23:1-6; Ezek 34).⁴⁶

But if in the Synoptic Gospels the tenants are the present generation of the Jewish leaders, than who do the “others” (Mark and Luke) and “a people/nation” (Matt) represent? At least in Mark, Gundry strongly denies that the “others” represent Gentiles, “The ‘others’ to whom the owner will give the vineyard cannot represent the Gentile Christians (and so need not reflect the later influx of Gentiles into the church).”⁴⁷ However, if “others” in Mark and Luke are not Gentiles, then who will be the new tenants of the vineyard? The identity of the “others” has been a source of controversy since these words were penned in the Gospels.⁴⁸ For example, the first two chapters of 4 Ezra (often called 5 Ezra⁴⁹), probably written sometime in the second century, define “others” as a new Israel, including primarily Gentiles (see discussion later in this

⁴⁴ Snodgrass, *The Parable*, 77-78.

⁴⁵ See 1 Kgs 19:8 (cf. Rom 11:4); 2 Kgs 19:30-31; Ezra 9:8-15; Isa 10:21-22; 11:11, 16; 27:31-32; Jer 23:3; 31:7; Mic 2:12; 7:18; and Zech 8:12.

⁴⁶ Story, “Hope in the Midst of Tragedy,” 194, concludes, “The religious leaders are singled out since they stand in representative capacity for the unbelieving Jews however they sit on Moses’ chair (23:2), fill up the measure of their ancestors’ guilt (23:32); their motives and actions are singular and corporate in the death of the Son.”

⁴⁷ Robert Gundry, *Mark, A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 688.

⁴⁸ Daniel J. Harrington and John R. Donahue, *The Gospel of Mark* (SP; Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2002), 339, “It is the tenant farmers (=the Jerusalem leadership) who are punished. Who the ‘others’ are is not clear. It is tempting to take them to be Gentile Christians, though this is unlikely since most of the leaders of the church in Mark’s day were still ethnic Jews.”

⁴⁹ Bruce Metzger, “The Fourth Book of Ezra,” in *OTP*, 1:517.

chapter).⁵⁰ Lane identifies the “others” as a new Israel: “Jesus clearly implies that the Sanhedrin has rejected God’s final messenger and that disaster will ensue. The sacred trust of the chosen people will be transferred to the new Israel of God.”⁵¹ That this “New Israel of God” will be made up of Gentiles (at least in part)⁵² is evident from the context of Mark where Gentile inclusion becomes a fact of the post-Passion era (note that Mark’s reference to “others” in the parable of the Tenants comes after the son’s death).⁵³ Wilson helpfully observes:

Mark firmly connects the inclusion of the Gentiles with Jesus’ death. In all the passages, 10:45, 14:24 and 12:1-9, it is made clear that this will occur after Jesus’ death. Apart from this temporal connection between the two events, 12:1-9 suggests a direct causal relationship between them. The other two sayings express not so much a causal relationship, but rather are statements of the universal implications of Jesus’ death.⁵⁴

Thus, even in Mark, where the reference to “others” lacks specificity, we can propose that Gentiles should be included within a broader group of reconstituted Israel which does not necessarily exclude Jews but certainly excludes a recalcitrant Jewish leadership.

Matthew 21:43, which comes from Matthew’s unique material (M), makes a stronger case for Gentile inclusion, due to the presence of the singular term “nation” or “people” (ἔθνος) as the recipient of the gift of the “Kingdom of God” taken from the tenants.⁵⁵ While we certainly

⁵⁰ The author of 5 Ezra (4 Ezra 1-2) writes in 1:24-37 (trans. Metzger): “What shall I do with you, O Jacob? You would not obey me, O Judah. I will turn to *other nations* and will give them my name, that they may keep my statutes. Because you have forsaken me, I will also forsake you . . . I will give your houses to a *people* that will come, who without having heard me will believe. Those to whom I have shown no signs will do what I have commanded. They have seen no prophets, yet will recall their former state. I call to witness the gratitude of *the people* that is to come, whose children rejoice with gladness [emphasis mine].” Thus, we see that already in the second century the identity of “others” has taken on a Gentile hue. See David Flusser, *Judaism*, 562-563.

⁵¹ William Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 419.

⁵² Story, “Hope in the Midst of Tragedy,” 193, observes, “This new people of God is comprised of both Jew and Gentile, a universal Church formed of all nations.”

⁵³ Newell, “The Parable,” 230-231.

⁵⁴ Wilson, *The Gentiles*, 30.

⁵⁵ David Sim, who argues the thesis that the Matthean community remained a Jewish sect in conflict with first-century Judaism, denies that Matt 21:43 refers at all to Gentiles. Sim argues, “The only ones in the parable who

cannot argue that the *singular form* of ἔθνος in 21:43 carries the same meaning of “Gentile nations” as the plural, τὰ ἔθνη,⁵⁶ (in, for example, 28:19), it almost certainly refers minimally to a community of both Gentiles and Jews who acknowledge Jesus as Messiah.⁵⁷ However, given the use of the term ἔθνος in both its singular and plural forms in Matthew,⁵⁸ and the general redactional tendencies of the First Gospel, it “inevitably alludes to the eventual mission to the Gentiles.”⁵⁹ However, an allusion to the participation of Gentiles doesn’t exclude Israel since the

are disobedient and punished are the tenants of the vineyard. These tenants lose their tenancy (21:41) and have the kingdom taken away from them (21:43), and Matthew explicitly identifies this group with the Jewish leaders (21:45). The people who are given the kingdom of God, the new tenants and the legitimate leaders of the Jewish people, are either the Matthean community alone or Christian Judaism in general. This pericope in no way suggests that the evangelist’s community had broken with Judaism; rather, it details God’s rejection of the Jewish leadership, and it demonstrates that Matthew’s Christian Jewish group claimed (albeit unsuccessfully) a leadership role within the Jewish community and within the Jewish religion.” David Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 149. However, the point can still be made that Matthew’s use in 21:43 of a theologically-loaded term often used to represent the Gentiles (in Matthew’s own Gospel) like ἔθνος (even in the singular), instead of the obvious choice of λαός (the term used most often for the covenant people of God, Israel, in texts like 1:21; 2:4; 4:16, 23; 13:15; 15:8; 27:25), is strong counter evidence to Sim’s argument.

⁵⁶ Karl Ludwig Schmidt, “ἔθνος, ἔθνικός,” *TDNT* 2.369.

⁵⁷ Nolland writes, “The parallelism of thought suggests that ἔθνος here should not be taken as specifically focused on non-Jews (cf. 8:12), but also Jews who had lost their place in the religious dimension of the national identity but who now respond to the message of the kingdom.” Nolland, *Matthew*, 879. Blomberg agrees with Nolland’s assessment: “In retrospect, and in light of the use of the term elsewhere, it is easy to assume that the *ethnos* (a “people” or “nation”) which produces the fruits of the kingdom and replaces the corrupt Jewish leaders must be exclusively Gentiles, but the context nowhere demands this assumption. The NT regularly conceives of the community of God’s people who produce “good fruit” as a combination of Jewish and Gentile followers of Jesus.” Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables*, 108-109. Balabanski echoes this view as well, “Matthew seeks to show that it is in the face of this turning away, constantly repeated, that God justly punishes Israel for its sin. Matthew does not consider God’s relationship with the covenant people cut off and offered instead to the Gentiles, though some might read Matt. 21:41 this way. The vineyard - rather than the tenants - represents the covenant relationship; the tenants are those who administer it. Matthew does view the Jewish leadership as unfit for this administration, and the transfer is to those who will produce the fruits of the Kingdom of God (21:43). Against the wider background of this Gospel, this refers to those who practice the ‘better righteousness’ (5:20), referring thus to Christians, Jewish and Gentile, though not all qualify (7:21ff). The reproach before the Gentiles is thus forestalled, for the Gentiles themselves, at least in part, are drawn into God’s wider plan (Matt. 2:1-12, 27:54, etc.).” Balabanski, *Eschatology in the Making*, 178.

⁵⁸ A study of the use of the term ἔθνος in Matthew reveals that of its 15 usages (4:15; 6:32; 10:5,18; 12:18, 21; 20:19, 25; 21:43; 24:7, 9, 14; 25:32; and 28:19), nearly all of them refer to Gentiles or a Gentile nation. The only other singular use of the term occurs in 24:7 where the reference is to “nation” rising against “nation,” which, in theory could refer to the Jewish War (66-73 A.D.) against Rome; but could just as likely refer to Gentile nations fighting amongst each other as a sign of the eschatological tribulation.

⁵⁹ Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 623.

tenants (=Jewish leadership) are being punished and not the vineyard (=Israel).⁶⁰ In light of this evidence, Matthew intended his comment in 21:43 to refer to Gentile inclusion and the exclusion of some in Israel (i.e., the Jewish leaders).

Our analysis has shown that the parable of the Tenants, most clearly in Matthew and possibly in Luke and Mark, connects the rejection of the Jewish leadership with the eventual inclusion of Gentiles into a reincorporated Israel. We have shown above that the “tenants” who the landlord destroys in Mark, Matthew, and Luke represent the Jewish leadership opposed to Jesus and the early Christian movement. The “others” in Mark (12:9)//Luke (20:16) and the “nation” in Matthew (21:43) who receive the vineyard in place of the tenants suggest that God will reincorporate his people into a group made up of Gentiles and faithful Jews.

III. Jesus and the Temple (Matt 21:12-16//Mark 11:15-18//Luke 19:45-47//John 2:13-25)

There are few narratives in the Gospels that speak more powerfully to the conflict between the early Christian movement and the Palestinian Jewish leadership.⁶¹ This narrative is important for our study because the theme of conflict between Jesus and the Jewish leaders is wedded directly to Gentile inclusion in three respects. First, the conflict episode occurs in the large outer court of the Temple platform, the so-called “Court of Gentiles.”⁶² Second, the Synoptic writers have included a justification for Jesus’ actions from Isa 56:7, a text that mentions the

⁶⁰ Konradt, *Matthew*, 184, argues against the idea that ἔθνος refers to the Gentiles. Rather, “It can hardly be disputed that ἔθνος refers to the (true) followers of Jesus—that is, those who have recognized that the stone that has been rejected is in fact the cornerstone.” Konradt is correct in postulating that the term ἔθνος does exclude Israel. Konradt does not wish to admit, however, that ἔθνος is a word of special significance in Matthew which refers too often to a non-Jewish people. This nuance is not eliminated simply because ἔθνος appears in a singular form contra Konradt, *Matthew*, 178.

⁶¹ John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew; Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (5 vols.; ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1994), 3:634, observes, “Jesus saw no difficulty in attending the great festivals in the temple and thereby implicitly acknowledging and accepting the ministrations of the priests in control. He thus accepted the Jerusalem temple *in the present order of things* [emphasis his]. Toward the end of his ministry, though, in both prophetic sayings and a prophetic-symbolic action (the ‘cleansing’ of the temple), Jesus foretold the temple’s destruction.”

⁶² Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew VIII-XVIII*, 137.

eschatological participation of the Gentiles in the Temple cult. Finally, the context of Jesus' dispute with the Temple authorities connects directly with Jesus' Olivet Discourse, a section of teaching that weaves together the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple, the inclusion of the Gentile nations in Israel, and the *Parousia* of the Son of Man.

During the times of Jesus and his earliest successors (and throughout the entire Second Temple period), the Jerusalem Temple was the center of Judaism. All the Jewish sects, with the exception of the Essenes of Qumran (who had withdrawn to the Judean desert because of their conviction that the priestly Temple cult was irredeemably polluted), considered the Temple to mediate the very presence of YHWH in the midst of his people.⁶³ Because of this religious significance, any posturing against or outright hostility to the Temple would be considered a grave offense by the Jewish authorities and many practicing Jews.⁶⁴ In addition to its religious significance, the Temple was also the seat of both Roman and Jewish hegemony over Judea and the Jewish Diaspora.⁶⁵ For these reasons, the Temple was also the flashpoint of violent crises (e.g., Luke 13:1).⁶⁶ Like the Greek Seleucid rulers before them, the Romans maintained a

⁶³ Dunn, *Partings*, 55. Note that while the inhabitants of Qumran rejected the Jerusalem Temple and its cult, they reproduced a similar cult within their monastic communities. It is interesting also that at least in years immediately following Easter, even the nascent Jewish-Christian community continued to participate in the Temple cult (see Acts 2:46; 3:1; 5:12, 20; etc.), through the time of Paul's bondage (Acts 21:26-27), and most likely until the Jewish War and the church's flight from Jerusalem.

⁶⁴ E. P. Sanders argues that one of the primary reasons that Jesus was killed was because of his hostility to the Temple. Sanders writes: "He [Jesus] made a threatening gesture, and added a threatening statement, against the temple. He was doubtless seen as having attacked it. In this case not just the priests, but most Jews, probably even those only marginally observant, would have been deeply offended." Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 270.

⁶⁵ Lynn H. Cohick, "Jesus as King of the Jews," in *Who Do My Opponents Say That I Am?* (ed. Scot McKnight and Joseph B. Modica; London: T & T Clark, 2008), 131. Note also that a well-functioning Temple was a massive source of revenue for the Jewish leaders (in the form of the temple-tax and the provisioning of ritually clean animals for sacrifice).

⁶⁶ Some more recent crises included the sacrilege that instigated the Maccabean revolt (1 Macc 1:54), Pilate's effort to enter Jerusalem with a Roman standard displaying an image of the Emperor at the beginning of his governorship, and Emperor Caligula's attempt to erect an image of himself within the Temple precincts. See Dunn, *The Partings*, 53. Another contemporary example would be Josephus' account of the slaughter of 3000 Jews in the Temple precincts which had been in dispute with his recently deceased father, Herod the Great. Josephus, *J.W.*, 2.88-90.

fortress adjacent to the temple (Fortress Antonia) where the activities on the Temple Mount could be closely monitored and soldiers dispatched in case of disturbance. Fear of creating a religious riot was ever-present, which explains why the Jewish Temple authorities feared to lay hands on Jesus during the day⁶⁷ and why Pilate turned over Jesus to be crucified.⁶⁸ Since its reconstruction by Herod the Great, the courtyard of the temple had been divided into at least three major sections: the outer (and largest) Court of the Gentiles, the Court of Women; and the Court of Israel (in which was the court of priests and the Temple itself). Due to their ritual uncleanness and presumed participation in idol-worship, Gentiles could not pass the division enclosing the Court of Women upon pain of death.⁶⁹ It was into the Court of the Gentiles, this seat of Roman-Jewish political hegemony and icon of religious authority, this powder-keg of instability, that Jesus stormed and symbolically committed the shocking acts according to Matt 21:12-16//Mark 11:15-18//Luke 19:45-47//John 2:13-25.

There is much in the Synoptic episode which fits the historical evidence of attitudes toward the first century Temple cult. First, we know that Jesus was not the only critic of the Temple cult for its perceived inadequacies and impurities.⁷⁰ Therefore, as an extraordinary religious personality, it is quite possible that Jesus did make a public spectacle of the perceived

⁶⁷ Compare Mark 11:18; 12:12; Matt 21:46; and Luke 20:19 to Mark 14:23; Matt 26:47; and Luke 22:47.

⁶⁸ See Mark 15:15; Matt 24:24-26; Luke 23:23-24.

⁶⁹ T. W. Manson, *Jesus and the Non-Jews*, A paper presented at the Ethel M. Wood Lecture of the University of London (London, March 3, 1954), 14-15.

⁷⁰ Josephus, *Ant.*, 18:18-19, notes that the Essenes withdrew from the Temple cult because their “lustrations” were more pure. Dunn, *Partings*, 55, says of the Essenes, “The anomaly was that they rejected the current priesthood in Jerusalem: the Temple had been defiled by ‘the Wicked Priest’ (IQpHab 8.8-9), and the current priesthood was illegitimate. So in effect they set themselves up as an alternative Temple community. With them concern for purity was even more dominant.” Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 3:499, notes that “We have multiple attestations for the fact that Jesus himself frequented the temple . . . In all the Gospels, the fact that Jesus goes up to the temple, teaches in the temple, and—in the Synoptics—celebrates the Passover with a lamb slain in the temple according to the temple’s ritual is taken for granted as an obvious datum that needs no explanation and generates no dispute.” Despite Jesus’ criticism of the Temple, he willingly participated in the cult.

inadequacies of the Temple cult. Although it would have been impossible for Jesus alone to completely disrupt the activities in the Temple plaza due to its massive size (37 acres), it is not unrealistic to suppose that he could have created a significant disturbance on it.⁷¹ Second, it is also not a stretch of the imagination to deduce that Jesus' Temple action was the major pretext for Jewish authorities' plan to silence him (e.g., Mark 12:18; cf. 13:1-2; 14:58; 15:19-20). We know from Josephus' account of Jesus ben Ananus' denunciation of the Temple in the years leading up to its destruction, both the Roman and Jewish authorities were more than willing to severely punish actions against the Temple cult.⁷² The greatest source of controversy about the Temple account centers on Jesus' quotation of Isa 56:7 and Jer 7:11 in Mark 11:17. E. P. Sanders argues that these quotations are additions from the Markan editor who wanted to present Jesus as cleansing or reforming the Temple cult instead of denouncing it and prophesying its complete destruction.⁷³ Several have come forward to reject Sander's claim, arguing that in fact Mark had consistently portrayed Jesus as denouncing the Temple and predicting its destruction (11:12-14, 20-21; 13:1-2; 14:58; 15:29-30; 15:38) throughout his Gospel and therefore would not be embarrassed to portray Jesus' prophetic denunciation in the Temple episode.⁷⁴ Thus, the element

⁷¹ Even though today the Al-Aqsa Mosque occupies a significant portion of what would have been the Court of the Gentiles in the first-century, its sheer size is overwhelming.

⁷² According to Josephus, four years before the beginning of the first Jewish War, Jesus ben Ananus began crying out, "A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds, a voice against Jerusalem and the holy house, a voice against the bridegrooms and the brides, and a voice against this whole people!" Despite severe beatings and whippings administered by both Jewish and Roman authorities, ben Ananus continued to his lament until finally silenced by an impacting projectile launched by the besieging Roman troops. Josephus, *J.W.*, 6.300-309.

⁷³ Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 66, writes, "If the saying in Mark 11:17 and par. were Jesus' own comment on why he 'cleansed' the temple, however, we would have to accept that it was indeed trade and sacrifice which bothered him, possibly because dishonesty was involved. In that verse the conflated quotation from Isa. 56.7 and Jer. 7.11 says that the temple should be a house of prayer (Mark has 'for all the Gentiles'), while 'you' have made it a den of robbers. The saying, however, is quite correctly rejected by most scholars as an addition."

⁷⁴ See Craig Evans, "Jesus' Action in the Temple: Cleansing or Portent of Destruction," *CBQ* 51 (1989): 237-270 and P. M. Casey, "Culture and Historicity: The Cleansing of the Temple," *CBQ* 59 (1997): 306-332. James Dunn, *Partings*, 64, notes that nothing in the quotation would have been alien to the theology of Jesus, "Not least of significance is the fact that it is to just this expectation that Mark 11.17 refers - Isa. 56.7 - that is, the strongly

of “cleansing” or reform apparent in Mark’s use of Isaiah and Jeremiah is not a Markan addition.⁷⁵ We, however, are not interested in what the Temple episode says or does not say about the early Christian view of the Temple cult in general. We are more interested in what the account says about the early Christian movement’s experience of rejection from the first century Jewish leadership and how that affected Gentile inclusion. To that end, we will discuss the quotation of Isa 56:7 below.

A persuasive indication within the Temple narrative that the Jewish leadership’s rejection of the early Christian movement led to the inclusion of the Gentiles is Jesus’ quotation of Isa 56:7 as a justification for his action.⁷⁶ While Matthew and Mark follow the LXX quotation of Isa 56:7 word for word, Matthew omits *πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν* (“for the nations”). Luke, on the other hand, is less tied to the LXX, leaving out both *πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν* and *κληθήσεται* (“will be called”). The obvious explanation for the omission of *πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν* in Matthew and Luke is they were writing after A.D. 70 when it was evident that Herod’s Temple would never become “a house of prayer for the nations.”⁷⁷

Figure 1: Usage of the LXX in Mark 11:17/Matt 21:13/Luke 19:46	
MARK	
Isa 56:7	ὁ γὰρ οἶκός μου οἶκος προσευχῆς κληθήσεται πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν
Mark 11:17	ὁ οἶκός μου οἶκος προσευχῆς κληθήσεται πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν; ὅτι οὐκ ἐπεποιήκατε αὐτὸν σπήλαιον ληστῶν
Jer 7:11	μὴ σπήλαιον ληστῶν ὁ οἶκός μου
LUKE	

attested hope in second Temple Judaism that in the last days the Gentiles would come in large numbers to Jerusalem as eschatological proselytes. That Jesus himself shared this hope is fairly clearly implied in Matt.8.11-12/Luke 13.28-9 and Mark 12.9. The implication would then be clear: that the action was eschatological in significance - *a symbolical representation of the 'cleansing' of the Temple which would be necessary if it was to serve its intended eschatological function* [emphasis his], and possibly even a symbolical attempt to bring about these conditions.”

⁷⁵ Evans, “Jesus’ Action,” 269, notes, “I am persuaded that the cleansing idea is too firmly entrenched in the tradition to be so easily set aside. Since the cleansing idea, if properly understood (i.e., not as an attack against the sacrificial system itself), coheres well with what we know of Jesus and with the background against which we must interpret him, it is appropriate that we let it stand.”

⁷⁶ Gundry, *Mark*, 644.

⁷⁷ Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew VIII-XVIII*, 133.

Isa 56:7	ὁ γὰρ οἶκός μου οἶκος προσευχῆς κληθήσεται πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν
Luke 19:46	καὶ ἔσται ὁ οἶκός μου οἶκος προσευχῆς [.....] ὕμεῖς δὲ αὐτὸν ἐποιήσατε σπήλαιον ληστῶν
Jer 7:11	μὴ σπήλαιον ληστῶν ὁ οἶκός μου
MATTHEW	
Isa 56:7	ὁ γὰρ οἶκός μου οἶκος προσευχῆς κληθήσεται πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν
Matt 21:13	ὁ οἶκός μου οἶκος προσευχῆς κληθήσεται [.....] ὕμεῖς δὲ αὐτὸν ποιεῖτε σπήλαιον ληστῶν
Jer 7:11	μὴ σπήλαιον ληστῶν ὁ οἶκός μου

While it is not necessary to provide an in-depth analysis of Isa 56:1-8, it is important to note that in this text, which serves as an introduction to Third Isaiah (chs. 56-66), two groups are included as members of Israel that would have not otherwise been: the eunuchs (LXX: εὐνοῦχος) and foreigners (LXX: ἀλλογενής). Normally, these two groups would have been excluded from the Temple based on Deut 23:1-8.⁷⁸ However, if the foreigners and eunuchs bind themselves to the Lord and keep *Torah* (see Isa 56:1-6), not only will they be allowed to join the assembly on the Holy Mountain, but YHWH will accept their offerings on his altar (Isa 56:7 LXX: καὶ αἱ θυσίαι αὐτῶν ἔσονται δεκταὶ ἐπὶ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου μου) just as those of the Israelites.⁷⁹ The resulting Temple will be “called a house of prayer for all nations” (οἶκος προσευχῆς κληθήσεται πᾶσιν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν).

The separation between Jew and Gentile, poignantly exemplified by the dividing wall (cf. Eph 2:14) in the Temple courts between the Gentiles and Israel, was only meant to preserve Israel from being absorbed into the pagan nations.⁸⁰ Should Israel seek to exclude the *Torah*-obedient Gentiles allying themselves with YHWH, then she would fall under the condemnation Jesus prophetically illustrated in the Temple narrative. Ben Witherington III summarizes the

⁷⁸ John H. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40-66* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 458.

⁷⁹ Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 459.

⁸⁰ James Dunn writes: “In the same way, an even more major boundary had also been broken through—that surrounding the court of Israel, which marked Israel off from the Gentile world, the ritual expression of Israel’s election and special set-apartness for God. This may be explicit in Ephesians’ talk of ‘breaking down the barrier formed by the dividing wall’ (Ephesians 2.14).” Dunn, *Partings*, 109.

Markan Jesus' quotation of Isa 56:7, "One could argue that Jesus was making the point that Gentiles had a right to use the temple as a house of prayer and be included in the Jewish cultus."⁸¹ In other words, for the early Christian movement, in the first appearance of the Messiah-Jesus, the time had arrived for the Temple to be "purified" or "reconstituted" for its "eschatological function as the focal point for the new age, for the eschatological pilgrimage of the Gentiles."⁸²

There is a second piece of evidence which suggests a connection between the Temple episode and the motif of the Jewish leaders' rejection leading to Gentile inclusion: the location of the episode itself. Undoubtedly, the early Christian movement found great symbolism in the fact that Jesus' Temple action occurred in the Court of the Gentiles.⁸³ Since OT times, Israel had awaited the day when not only the exiles would return to the Promised Land, but also the Gentile nations would accompany them to give allegiance to YHWH at his Temple (i.e., the Eschatological Pilgrimage discussed in Chapter Two).⁸⁴ The Court of the Gentiles existed for the sake of Gentile participation in YHWH's cult.

After the completion of the plaza and royal portico by Herod the Great in the decades preceding Jesus, however, a greatly enlarged area became available in the Court of the Gentiles for the commerce that supported the Temple cult.⁸⁵ Clearly, the use of the enlarged court of the Gentiles for this task was objectionable to the tradition Mark utilizes to describe the Temple episode. For as we saw above in the quotation from Isa 56, the tradition "knew that the only part

⁸¹ Witherington III, *Jesus, Paul and the End of the World*, 139.

⁸² Dunn, *The Partings*, 74.

⁸³ Schnabel, "Jesus and the Beginnings," 54.

⁸⁴ Jeremias, *Jesus' Promise*, 65-66.

⁸⁵ Casey, "Historicity," 309.

of the temple foreigners were allowed in was the court of the Gentiles; hence, if they are to be joyful ‘in my [YHWH’s] house of prayer’—and this is to be ‘a house of prayer for all peoples’—*prayer*, not trade, must be what the court of the Gentiles was for.”⁸⁶ The fact that Jesus’ prophetic action takes place in the space provided for Gentiles to pray and worship shows that the early Christian tradition Mark utilizes is concerned about the inclusion of Gentiles into the worship of God’s people.⁸⁷ Jesus, the agent of the prophetic denunciation of the Temple, would himself be subject to the rejection of the Jewish leadership and eventual execution (Mark 14:57-58; 15:29) for his behavior in the Court of Gentiles.⁸⁸ Thus, the early Christian tradition cements the connection between the Jewish leadership’s rejection of the early Christian community and Gentile inclusion by the location of the Temple episode.

Outside of these two pieces of evidence connecting the Jewish leadership’s rejection of the early Christian message and the inclusion of the Gentiles, we may appeal to the context of the Temple controversy itself as further evidence. The entire Passion Week narrative is really one extended conflict about the Temple that culminates in Jesus’ crucifixion.⁸⁹ It is inaugurated by Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem, lamenting its coming destruction (Luke 19:41-44), and, immediately afterwards (in Luke and Matthew as opposed to Mark where Jesus returns to Bethany), his prophetic judgment against a Temple that systematically excludes the Gentiles. At the close of Passion Week, Jesus is accused before the Sanhedrin of claiming that he will “destroy the Temple and rebuild it in three days” (Matt 26: 61//Mark 14:58). Within this chiasmus (i.e.,

⁸⁶ Casey, “Historicity,” 312.

⁸⁷ D. Juel, *Messiah and Temple* (SBLDS 31; Missoula, Mont.: Scholars, 1977), 199. David Seeley, “Jesus’ Temple Act,” *CBQ* 55 (1993), 280, writes, “These passages suggest that Mark was looking toward Gentiles as fertile ground for Christian preaching. The notion that Jesus attacked the temple because it was somehow taking insufficient account of Gentiles would have fit very well into this schema.”

⁸⁸ Seeley, “Jesus’ Temple Act,” 281-282.

⁸⁹ Cohick, “Jesus as King,” 120-124.

between the Temple “cleansing” and the Temple “accusation”), the subject of the Temple’s destruction in connection with future Gentile inclusion comes up repeatedly, in, for example, the parable of the Tenants and the Talents. Also, the Olivet Discourse (Mark 13, Matt 24-25, Luke 21:4-48), which is Jesus’ response to the disciples’ amazement about the beautiful Temple and its grounds, addresses the issue of the Jewish leaders’ rejection of Jesus and his message and the resulting inclusion of the Gentiles into the eschatological people of God (see especially Mark 13:10 and Matt. 24:14).⁹⁰ Jesus’ appearance at the Jerusalem Temple, as we have received it in the Synoptic tradition, shows that “In the new, Messianic Temple the Gentiles would have their rightful place. The whole action is best understood in the light of the sayings about the destruction of the Temple, showing that the inclusion of the Gentiles is to be connected with the End events.”⁹¹

In summary, Jesus’ overturning of tables of the money changers and driving out the vendors in the court of the Gentiles was a symbolic prophetic act indicating the time of God’s judgment had come upon the Jerusalem Temple.⁹² In the mind of the early Christian movement, this judgment was not only because of corruption, impurity, and other moral or ceremonial offenses (as the Essenes argued).⁹³ As we have seen above, an important part of the basis for the judgment

⁹⁰ Balabanski, *Eschatology in the Making*, 58-60.

⁹¹ Wilson, *The Gentiles*, 29.

⁹² E. P. Sanders argues strongly that the Temple action should not be considered a cleansing, but rather a prophetic announcement of its destruction and the inauguration of a new, perfect Temple. He writes, “The discussion of whether or not Jesus succeeded in interrupting the actual functioning of the temple points us in the right direction for seeing what the action symbolized but did not accomplish: it symbolized destruction. That is one of the most obvious meanings of the action of overturning itself. Some have seen this, but the force and obviousness of the point are obscured as long as we continue to think that Jesus was demonstrating against the Sadducees for profiting and in favour of purifying the temple of externalism.” Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 66.

⁹³ For example, Ben Witherington III, *Matthew* (Macon, Ga.: Smyth and Helwys, 2006), 394, argues that Matthew presents Jesus as becoming angry “because the place is so corrupt that Jesus foresees its destruction within a generation.” Other commentators point to the quotations from Isa 56 and the location of disputation in the Court of the Gentiles as evidence that there is a concern about Gentiles in view.

was that the Temple cult made no provision for Gentile inclusion due to the commercial activities occurring in the place where the Gentile nations were to worship YHWH as Lord.⁹⁴

The fact that Jesus was rejected and killed for making this statement solidifies a connection between the Jewish leadership's rejection and the motif of Gentile inclusion.

IV. The "East/West" Saying (Matt 8:11-12//Luke13:28-29) and the Parable of the Shut Door (Luke 13:22-30)

In Chapter Three we have examined several texts that illustrate the Jewish leadership's rejection of Jesus and his immediate successors. Connected to the motif of rejection in these texts are references to the inclusion of Gentiles into the early Christian community, suggesting, at least in the mind of early Christian writers, a connection between these two themes. Another critical text that charts the experience of rejection and the resulting openness to including the Gentiles is the parable of the Shut Door (Luke 13:22-30)⁹⁵ and a key Q saying that appears therein, what we call the "East/West" saying (Matt 8:11-12//Luke13:28-29).⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Thus, Bird writes, "Jesus censures the Temple for failing to draw the nations to Zion, and instead, it had become an icon for Jewish nationalism." By "nationalism," Bird refers to the tendency for the Temple theology to be put in the service of those who would exclude Gentiles for the sake of purity. Bird, "Jesus and the Gentiles," 101-102. See also Dunn, *Partings*, 67, "The implication would then be clear: that the action was eschatological in significance - a symbolical representation of the 'cleansing' of the Temple which would be necessary if it was to serve its intended eschatological function, and possibly even a symbolical attempt to bring about these conditions." Seeley, "Jesus' Temple Act Revisited," 62, similarly observes, "At first glance, the pericope looks like a 'cleansing' in *defense* [italics his] of the temple's holiness. Jesus does not attack the priests directly but takes on relatively tangential aspects of the temple system. Yet, when one considers the passage in the context of the Gospel's completed trajectory, its real significance takes shape. On behalf of wronged Gentiles Jesus stops the carrying of any vessels, the paying of the temple tax, and the purchase of sacrificial animals."

⁹⁵ The parable of the Shut Door is most often called the parable of the "Narrow Door." However, the point of the Lukan parable is not that the door is *narrow* (as is the point of the parabolic saying of Matt 7:13-14), but rather that *it will soon close*: "Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking" [Luke 13:25]. Therefore, I have chosen to refer to this parable as the parable of the *Shut Door*.

⁹⁶ John Nolland observes that the parable of the Shut Door very much parallels the parable of the Wedding Feast which we will analyze later in Chapter Six. See John Nolland, *Luke*, 736. Similarly, Joel Green observes, "On the other hand, Jesus' answer [to the question posed to him is vs. 23] is quite intelligible when read against the horizons of the eschatological banquet scene in Isaiah 25:6-9, whose images and vocabulary are mirrored in the Lukan scene. Isaiah had described the end as a lavish banquet, a feast fit for royalty, yet prepared for *all* peoples." Joel Green, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 528.

Before digging into the parable of the Shut Door and the East/West saying, we must make a note. In the analysis below we will use the tools of redaction criticism in order to discern the basic outline and structure of the source (Q) inherited by Matthew and Luke. The goal of this analysis is *not* to shed light on Jesus' own words. Rather, the goal is to discern Matthew and Luke's modifications to Q which will show their own unique perspectives on the motifs of rejection and Gentile inclusion. The critical task is especially important to our analysis of the parable of the Shut Door because of the diverse presentation in Matthew and Luke. In Luke, the Q material of these sayings is effectively gathered into one literary unit (Luke 13:22-30) which is thematically linked together.⁹⁷ In Matthew, on the other hand, the material is woven into several different stories and parables. Figure one below summarizes the placement of these sayings in Matthew and Luke:

Figure Two: Synopsis of the parable of the Shut Door (Luke 13:22-30)	
Matthew	Luke
	13:22 Καὶ διεπορεύετο κατὰ πόλεις καὶ κώμας διδάσκων καὶ πορείαν ποιούμενος εἰς Ἱερουσόλυμα.
	13:23 Εἶπεν δέ τις αὐτῷ· κύριε, εἰ ὀλίγοι οἱ σωζόμενοι, ὃ δὲ εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτοὺς
7:13a Εἰσελθατε διὰ τῆς στενῆς πύλης· ὅτι	13:24a ἀγωνίζεσθε εἰσελθεῖν διὰ τῆς στενῆς θύρας, ὅτι
	13:24b πολλοί, λέγω ὑμῖν, ζητήσουσιν εἰσελθεῖν καὶ οὐκ ἰσχύσουσιν.
25:10c καὶ ἐκλείσθῃ ἡ θύρα.	13:25a ἀφ' οὗ ἂν ἐγερθῇ ὁ οἰκοδεσπότης
25:11b λέγουσαι κύριε κύριε, ἄνοιξον ἡμῖν.	13:25b καὶ ἀποκλείσῃ τὴν θύραν
25:11c ὃ δὲ ἀποκριθεὶς	13:25c καὶ ἄρξῃσθε ἔξω ἐστάναι καὶ κρούειν τὴν θύραν
25:11d εἶπεν·	13:25d λέγοντες· κύριε, ἄνοιξον ἡμῖν,
25:11e ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, οὐκ οἶδα ὑμᾶς.	13:25e καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς
	13:25f ἐρεῖ ὑμῖν·
	13:25g οὐκ οἶδα ὑμᾶς πόθεν ἐστέ.
Possible correlations include Matt. 7:22 and/or 25:35-36, 42-43	13:26 τότε ἄρξῃσθε λέγειν· ἐφάγομεν ἐνώπιόν σου καὶ ἐπίομεν καὶ ἐν ταῖς πλατείαις ἡμῶν ἐδίδαξας

⁹⁷ According to John Kloppenborg, *Q Parallels* (Sonoma, Cal.: Polebridge Press, 1988), 154-157, the majority of the text in the parable of the Shut Door originates from Q with the exception of 13:22-23.

7:23a καὶ τότε ὁμολογήσω αὐτοῖς 7:23b ὅτι οὐδέποτε ἔγνων ὑμᾶς· 7:23c ἀποχωρεῖτε ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ οἱ ἐργαζόμενοι τὴν ἀνομίαν.	13:27a καὶ ἐρεῖ λέγων ὑμῖν· 13:27b οὐκ οἶδα [ὑμᾶς] πόθεν ἐστέ· 13:27c ἀπόσπῃτε ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ πάντες ἐργάται ἀδικίας.
8:12b ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων,	13:28a ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων,
8:11c μετὰ Ἀβραάμ καὶ Ἰσαὰκ καὶ Ἰακώβ ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τῶν οὐρανῶν,	13:28b ὅταν ὀψησθε Ἀβραάμ καὶ Ἰσαὰκ καὶ Ἰακώβ <u>καὶ πάντας τοὺς προφῆτας ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ.</u>
8:12a <u>οἱ δὲ υἱοὶ τῆς βασιλείας</u> ἐκβληθήσονται εἰς τὸ σκότος τὸ ἐξώτερον [Go to 8:12b above]	13:28c ὑμᾶς δὲ ἐκβαλλομένους ἔξω.
8:11a <u>λέγω δὲ ὑμῖν ὅτι πολλοὶ</u> [re πολλοί, note link with Luke 13:24b] ἀπὸ ἀνατολῶν καὶ δυσμῶν ἔξουσιν 8:11b καὶ ἀνακλιθήσονται [Go to 8:11c above]	13:29a καὶ ἔξουσιν ἀπὸ ἀνατολῶν καὶ δυσμῶν <u>καὶ ἀπὸ βορρᾶ καὶ νότου</u> 13:29b καὶ ἀνακλιθήσονται <u>ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ.</u>
20:16 οὕτως ἔσονται οἱ ἔσχατοι πρῶτοι καὶ οἱ πρῶτοι ἔσχατοι.	13:30a καὶ ἰδοὺ εἰσὶν ἔσχατοι οἱ ἔσονται πρῶτοι 13:30b καὶ εἰσὶν πρῶτοι οἱ ἔσονται ἔσχατοι.

According to Darrell Bock, there is really no solid connection between Matthew’s parable of the Narrow Door and Luke’s parable of the Shut Door.⁹⁸ A brief scan of the table above would seem to support Bock’s assertion as it reveals that Matthew scatters the same material as Luke utilizes in the parable of the Shut Door throughout his entire gospel instead of placing it in one pericope. Assuming the correlations we suggest in Figure Two above are correct, an interesting phenomenon emerges. Matthew places all the Q-material used in Luke’s parable of the Shut Door in at least one of three contexts: separation/judgment (Matt 7:13a, 23; 8:12a-b; 25:11b-e; 20:16), the *Parousia* (25:10c-11e), and the inclusion of the Gentiles (8:11a-c).⁹⁹ Secondly, 13:22-30 is the only context in which Luke uses Matthew’s favorite phrase for judgment, ὁ

⁹⁸ Bock writes, “Despite conceptual parallels to Matt. 7:13-14; 25:10-12; 7:22-23; 25:41; 8:11-12; 19:30; 20:16; and Mark 10:31, this passage [Luke 13:22-30] is an independent tradition that Luke alone had or that represents the combining of various materials from Jesus’ ministry.” Darrel Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53* (BECNT; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 1230, 1236.

⁹⁹ Flusser, *Judaism*, 555, argues that a significant portion of Luke 13:22-30 comes from the Q-sayings that Matthew has preserved in the parable of the Virgins (Matt 25:1-13). See also Puig i Tàrrach, “La Parabole des Talents,” 214. Puig i Tàrrach argues that verses 8:10c-12 are redactional additions constructed from Q.

κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων [weeping and gnashing of teeth].¹⁰⁰ Instead of weaving an entirely new passage from detached Q-sayings or his special tradition (sometimes called “L”), it is likely that Luke’s parable of the Shut Door more closely resembles the original Q-sayings and that Matthew broke up the Q-sayings and utilized the individual components in the context of eschatological judgment and admission of Gentiles which resembled the original context and intent of the Q-sayings as Matthew received them.¹⁰¹

This supposition provides a good explanation for several phenomena. First, it explains the absence of any allusion to the East/West Saying in Luke’s narrative of the Centurion (7:1-10) despite the fact that Luke 7:9 is nearly identical to Matt 8:10, which occasions the East/West logion in Matthew. Thus, we can deduce that the East/West saying was never connected to the Centurion narrative in Q as it is in Matthew; but rather it was connected to the parable of the Shut Door much as it appears in Luke. Second, supposition accounts for the presence of Luke’s extraordinary and singular usage of Matthew’s favorite, “weeping and gnashing of teeth” in 13:28. Luke wouldn’t use this phrase unless it was present in the Q version of the parable of the Shut Door which he received. Third, our supposition elucidates the absence of Luke’s parable of the Shut Door in the First Gospel (in preference for the parable of the Narrow Door in Matt 7:13-14). Matthew likely considered the ample criticism already leveled against the Jewish leadership for its intransigence and the parallel instances of openness to Gentiles as sufficient to make the

¹⁰⁰ Luke uses this phrase once (13:28) versus Matthew’s seven usages (2:18; 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30).

¹⁰¹ We recognize that this assertion is not shared by the majority of commentators (See Nolland, *Luke*, 732). However, our suggestion can explain several issues raised by the related texts in Matthew and Luke. Nevertheless, we recognize that Luke 13:22-30 shows obvious signs of redaction such as 13:22-23 (cf. Luke 19:11) which are quite obviously editorial appendages to Q and v. 30 which is taken from the tradition and placed in a new context.

point without the Q parable of the Shut Door.¹⁰² Finally, our supposition affirms the tendency of Luke not to create an entire pericope *ex-nihilo*, but to adapt (or even sometimes to exclude) the sources that he received depending on his theological program.

There is diversity among scholars both for and against the outline of the Q-parable of the Shut Door which we propose above. One strong supporter of the outline we have suggested is Konradt who claims, “Luke 13.24-30 is a coherent composition of Q logia.”¹⁰³ In contrast, according to Konradt, Matthew has broken up the Q-sayings and scattered them throughout his Gospel retaining the same order as the original logion.¹⁰⁴ Similarly Kloppenborg¹⁰⁵ and Robinson¹⁰⁶ substantially agree with the outline of Q provided above. Bock, however, rejects the outline of Q above, “Despite conceptual parallels to Matt. 7.13-14; 25:10-12; 7:22-23; 25:41; 8.11-12; 19:30; 20:16; and Mark 10:31, this passage is an independent tradition that Luke alone has or that represents the combining of various materials from Jesus’ ministry.”¹⁰⁷ Similarly, Drury argues that Luke’s parable of the Shut Door consists of a number of separate logia that Luke has pieced together into a parable.¹⁰⁸ Nolland seeks a middle ground by attributing some of

¹⁰² Noting Matthew’s many “anti-Jewish” and “pro-Gentile statements,” Flusser argues, “Previously, it was generally thought that Matthew reflects the anti-Jewish feelings of early Jewish Christians, but it has now become practically certain that the final redactor of Matthew was a Gentile Christian, and that he is responsible for the virulent anti-Judaism contained in this Gospel. Matthew is the only synoptic Gospel in which Israel as a whole is dispossessed and the Gentile Church takes its place. This is not the Jewish Christian standpoint, but the extreme position of a gentile Christian.” Flusser, *Judaism*, 627.

¹⁰³ Konradt, *Matthew*, 203.

¹⁰⁴ Konradt, *Matthew*, 203-204, notes, “Matthew, however, rearranges groups of sayings taken from Q elsewhere in the Gospel. The assumption that this is the case here as well is supported by the fact that the logia from Q 13:24-30 are scattered in Matthew but occur in the same order (Matt 7.13, 22-23; 8.11-12). If Matthew and Luke found Q 13.28-29 in the location retained in Luke, then the Lukan sequence of the two verses is likely the original, since the verses integrate seamlessly with the context, as we have seen, whereas the Matthean order can easily be explained by the secondary insertion of the verses into the centurion pericope.”

¹⁰⁵ Kloppenborg, *Q Parallels*, 152-157

¹⁰⁶ James Robinson, *et al.*, *The Critical Edition of Q* (Hermeneia; Leuven: Peeters, 2000), 406-419.

¹⁰⁷ Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1230-1231.

¹⁰⁸ John Drury, *Parables in the Gospels: History and Allegory* (New York: Crossroad, 1985), 120.

the sayings in 13:22-30 to Q (vv. 24-29) while others he considers free compositions (vv. 22-23) or floating logia (v. 30).¹⁰⁹ On the whole, as Konradt has argued, the balance of the evidence favors the reconstruction we have proposed above.

Despite our claim that Luke's parable of the Shut Door better represents the Q-source in general, we must admit that Matthew better preserves individual pieces such as the East/West saying itself in Matt 8:11-12.¹¹⁰ In this saying, Luke expands Q with references like "all the prophets in the Kingdom of God" (13:28b: καὶ πάντας τοὺς προφῆτας ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ), "in the Kingdom of God" (13:29b: ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ), and "north and south" (13:29a: καὶ ἀπὸ βορρᾶ καὶ νότου). This suggests that his is not the most simple and thus closest to Q for this particular saying.¹¹¹ Other Lukan additions include the introduction with question¹¹² in 13:22-23 and the "lesson" in v. 30.¹¹³

If, outside of the several editorial insertions discussed above, Luke's version most closely resembles Q, and if Matthew has split up Q and utilized it in the context of the *Parousia*, Gentile inclusion, and Jewish rejection,¹¹⁴ then what we have in the parable of the Shut Door is an

¹⁰⁹ John Nolland, Luke 9:21-18:34 (WBC 35b; Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989), 732-733.

¹¹⁰ Kloppenborg, *Q Parallels*, 153.

¹¹¹ Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Last Days*, 169-170.

¹¹² Joel Green records the following examples of opening questions in Luke-Acts: Luke 9:57; 10:25; 11:15, 27, 45; 12:13, 41; 13:1; 17:37; 20:13; 24:5; Acts 1:6. Green, *Luke*, 529.

¹¹³ Nolland, Luke 9:21-18:3, 732.

¹¹⁴ See Flusser, *Judaism*, 627-628 for further evidence of my position regarding the utilization of Q in the above-cited texts. Also, Cadoux notes, "The Matthean version of all but the last sentence of this passage (Mt. viii. 11f.) appears immediately after the Matthean account of the Centurion's faith; this was probably not its original place in Q, but the choice of it shows that the compiler of Mt. saw common significance of both passages." Cadoux, *The Historical Mission*, 155.

example of the fusion of the themes of Jewish rejection and Gentile inclusion parallel to the Temple narrative and the parable of the Tenants.¹¹⁵

In addition to a source- and redaction-critical analysis, we can bolster our argument that the parable of the Shut Door and the East/West saying connect Jewish rejection with Gentile inclusion by citing the context of the sayings in both Luke and Matthew. In the Lukan context, the parable of the Shut Door occurs after the parable of the Mustard Seed in 13:18-19 and before Jesus' declaration of sorrow for Jerusalem for its rejection of the prophets in 13:34-35 (cf. 19:41-44). While we will address the parable of the Mustard Seed at length in Chapter Five, both Bock and Nolland assert that in the Lukan parable of the Mustard Seed the spreading mustard tree with birds perched in its branches is a reference to Gentile inclusion into the early Christian community.¹¹⁶ Jesus' lament over Jerusalem, occasioned by a Herodian scheme to kill him (13:31), similarly brings the theme of Jesus' rejection by the Jewish leadership to the fore. Bock skillfully connects the sayings of 13:18-19 and 13:34-35 to the parable of the Shut Door,

The kingdom's coming [i.e., the parables of the Kingdom like the Mustard Seed] has implications for the Jewish nation. The time to join God's eschatological program has come, so one had better respond quickly before the door closes. Jesus stresses the nation's situation in the picture of the narrow and soon-shut door. After this passage, Jesus will issue a lament, because the nation does not respond (13:31-35).¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ In preparation for this study, I made the decision not to include the parable of the Shut Door with the parable of the Wedding Banquet in my discussion of delay and Gentile inclusion in the motif of wedding feast. I am convinced that Q connected the delay of the *Parousia* with Gentile inclusion. However, the parable of the Shut Door, as it appears in Luke, does not mention delay. Furthermore, the parable of the Virgins in Matt 25 does not directly mention inclusion of the Gentiles.

¹¹⁶ Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1226-1227. See also Nolland, *Luke*, 728-729. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Last Days*, 194, writes, "But the extension of the picture with the words 'it forms branches so large that the birds of the air can nest beneath its shade' has the effect of turning the picture into a well-known cartoon: the mustard plant has become the tree of apocalyptic prophecy, which exemplifies the universality of a reign embracing all peoples."

¹¹⁷ Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1231.

Thus, the Lukan context suggests the fusion of the themes of rejection and Gentile inclusion. The parable of the Mustard Seed contains Gentile inclusion and Jesus' lament over Jerusalem contains the rejection motif.

If there is any doubt about the presence of Jewish rejection and Gentile inclusion in the context of the parable of the Shut Door (Luke 13:22-30), there can be none for the context of the East/West saying in Matt 8:11-12. First, the logion is placed in the middle of Jesus' encounter with a Roman Centurion who had a sick child or servant (8:8: ὁ παῖς μου). While we can debate whether or not the Centurion was a *God-fearer* or simply a pagan (as the position of centurion would require some kind of participation in the Roman emperor cult), there is no doubt that he was a Gentile and that his identity as such was theologically important to Matthew.¹¹⁸ Furthermore, the East/West logion is immediately preceded by Jesus' solemn and astonished declaration, "I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone [οὐδενὶ] in Israel with such great faith [τοσαύτην πίστιν]." Not only does Jesus' declaration about the Centurion's faith justify the inclusion of the Gentiles, it also "is intended to shame Jews into responding as had this Gentile."¹¹⁹ The effect of this declaration is to reinforce a second shocking assertion of 8:12 regarding the "sons of the kingdom" (οἱ υἱοὶ τῆς βασιλείας), or the intransigent people of Israel (in contrast to this faithful Gentile Centurion), who would be "thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."¹²⁰ Matthew leads his reader to the

¹¹⁸ Schnabel, "Jesus and the Beginnings," 51, states, "Thus, whether or not Jesus regarded the centurion of Capernaum as a converted Gentile, it seems obvious that he speaks of the basic reality of Gentiles belonging to the kingdom of God."

¹¹⁹ Paul D. Meyer, "The Gentile Mission in Q," *JBL* 89 (1970), 411.

¹²⁰ Meyer writes: "As 'sons of the kingdom,' as the descendants of Abraham, they may have expected privileged places. But the 'line of Abraham' which will enjoy salvation will be a line of faith and repentance— a line which the Q-community was compelled to recognize includes Gentiles freely . . . Since God can even create 'his people' from stones, this is not simply a demand for personal faith in addition to being physically descended from Abraham. God's people are now defined by confession of the Son of man (Luke 12.8 = Matt 12.32) and obedience to his teaching (Matt 7.24-27/Luke 6.47 ff.)." Meyer, "The Gentile Mission in Q," 413.

embarrassing conclusion that the ostensibly righteous Israelites (i.e., the “sons of the Kingdom”) who reject Jesus will lose their place at the banquet table to the ostensibly pagan Gentiles who positively respond! The Matthean context of the healing of the Centurion’s servant or child reinforces the message of the Jewish leaders’ rejection and the inclusion of the Gentiles.

While we have solidly made the case that the rejection of the Jewish leaders and Gentile inclusion are foundational to the parable of the Shut Door and the East/West Saying, we must dwell for a moment on the concept of Eschatological Pilgrimage or Feast which is so essential to the East/West saying.¹²¹ This is necessary because some have argued that Matthew’s “many will come from the east and the west” and Luke’s “people will come from east and west and north and south” do not refer to Gentiles at all, but instead refer to the return of Jewish exiles to Israel. The main proponent of this view, Dale Allison, Jr. claims,

Matt. 8.11-12 = Luke 13.28-29 was originally a prophecy about the eschatological ingathering of dispersed Jews. It took up this stock theme in order to threaten certain Jews in Israel with judgment. The saying had nothing at all to do with Gentiles.¹²²

There are a number of OT and Apocryphal texts which Allison uses to support his position such as Ps 107:3; Isa 43:5; Zech 8:7; Bar 4:37; *Pss. Sol.* 11:2; etc.¹²³

In response to Allison and others who argue emphatically that the East/West saying refers to Jews returning from exile,¹²⁴ we note that there is obviously a great similarity between the image

¹²¹ In Matthew, the East/West logion refers to an eschatological meal with the patriarchs, καὶ ἀνακλιθήσονται μετὰ Ἀβραάμ καὶ Ἰσαὰκ καὶ Ἰακώβ ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τῶν οὐρανῶν (“[They] will recline to eat with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven”). Luke similarly states ἀνακλιθήσονται ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ (“[They] will recline to eat in the Kingdom of God.”) These similar phrases clearly indicate that Q contains the motif of the Eschatological Banquet or Eschatological Pilgrimage. See Jeremias, *Jesus’ Promise*, 55-56.

¹²² Allison, Jr., “Who Will Come,” 169.

¹²³ Allison, Jr., “Who Will Come,” 162.

of the return of Jewish exiles to Jerusalem and the Eschatological Pilgrimage of the Nations since both movements have the same origin (i.e., the nations), destination (Jerusalem), and timeframe (eschatological).¹²⁵ It is easy to see how one of these motifs could be equated with the other. Whether the original *Sitz im leben Jesu* referred to Jewish exiles or not, for the purposes of our analysis we are interested only in *how the East/West saying was used in the early Christian movement*.

Above we have argued that even in the pre-Matthean and pre-Lukan layer (Q), the sojourners in the East/West saying were considered Gentiles.¹²⁶ The East/West saying appears in a modified form within *4 Ezra 1:24-40* (also known as *5 Ezra 1*):

What shall I do to you, O Jacob? You, Judah, would not obey me. I will turn to other nations and will give them my name, so that they may keep my statutes . . . I gathered you as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings [cf. Matt 23:37//Luke 13:34]. But now, what shall I do to you? I will cast you out from my presence . . . I will give your houses to a people that will come, who without having heard me will believe. Those to whom I have shown no signs will do what I have commanded. They have seen no prophets, yet will recall their former state . . . ‘And now, father [God addressing Ezra as the “father” of the nation], look with pride and see the people coming from the east; to them I will give as leaders Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob [cf. Matt 8:11-12//Luke 13:28-29], and Hosea and Amos and Micah and Joel and Obadiah and Jonah and Nahum and Habakkuk,

¹²⁴ Konradt, *Matthew*, 205-207, has recently argued a thesis somewhat similar to Allison’s, but from a different angle. He claims that in the Matthean logion (8:11-12), the people coming from the east and west are both Jews and Gentiles, or all those who respond to the preaching of the Kingdom. Similarly, the “sons of the Kingdom” who are cast out are not exclusively Jewish either, but are those who have learned about the Kingdom but refused to accept it.

¹²⁵ Compare, for example, texts referring to the Eschatological Pilgrimage of the Nations such as Ps 87; Isa 2:1-4 (par. Mic 4:1-4); 18:7; 25:6-8; 66:18-19; Jer 3:17; 16:19; Mic 7:12; Zeph 3:8-10; Zec 2:10-13; 8:20-23; and 14:16-19 with texts referring to the return of the exiles such as Ps 107:3; Isa 43:5; Zech 8:7; Bar 4:37; and *Pss. Sol.* 11:2.

¹²⁶ Allison concludes, “Passed down without a context, it was susceptible of being reinterpreted against the original sense. This unfortunately happened when the author of Matthew placed the logion in the middle of a pericope which contained a Jew/Gentile contrast. The new context suggested the identification of those from east and west with the Gentiles.” Allison, Jr., “Who Will Come,” 167.

Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi,¹²⁷ who is also called the messenger of the Lord.¹²⁸

Based on cryptic references to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, Bruce Metzger,¹²⁹ Michael Stone,¹³⁰ and Theodore Bergen¹³¹ argue that chs. 3-14 of 4 Ezra are first century Jewish writings while chs. 1-2 (called 5 Ezra) and 15-16 were added later by an unknown Christian author. Whether the 5 Ezra text quoted above draws on the same Q-sayings utilized by Matthew and Luke or whether 5 Ezra is influenced by the Synoptic Gospels themselves, it is further evidence that in the early Christian movement the Gentile nations are the sojourners that come from the “East and West” to replace the hardened within Israel in the eschaton.¹³²

In the final analysis, the parable of the Shut Door, like the parable of the Talents/Minas as we will see in Chapter Seven, makes a strong point about the rejection of the early Christian movement by the first century Jewish leadership (and by extension, many in Israel) and the inclusion of the Gentiles in the eschatological Kingdom of God. Witherington expresses the point well:

Jesus is not merely arguing for Gentile inclusion in final blessedness but for the displacement of some Jews by Gentiles . . . What is striking about this saying is that Jesus envisions the Gentiles sitting down and sharing table-fellowship with the patriarchs. Normally, this would be understood to entail the ritual defilement for the Jews involved . . . Jesus’ vision of the Dominion then seems to include both Gentiles and Jews in final blessedness.¹³³

¹²⁷ Note that Luke 13:28 mentions the prophets, though it does not name them. The author of 5 Ezra mentions some of the prophets.

¹²⁸ Translation taken from the NRSV.

¹²⁹ Bruce Metzger, “The Fourth Book of Ezra,” in *OTP*, 1:520.

¹³⁰ Michael Stone’s commentary on 4 Ezra excludes chapters 1-2 and 15-16. See Michael Stone, *Fourth Ezra* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990).

¹³¹ Theodore Bergen, *Fifth Ezra; The Text, Origin and Early History* (Atlanta: Scholar’s Press, 1990), 2-3.

¹³² Flusser, *Judaism*, 564

¹³³ Witherington III, *Jesus, Paul and the End of the World*, 137-138.

For Torah-observant first century Jews, the idea that ritually impure Gentiles would “recline at the feast” of the patriarchs in the Kingdom of God must have been at least disconcerting and, more likely, highly offensive.¹³⁴ Although the harshness of this saying for Israel is obvious (i.e., that the *first* [biological Israel] will be *last* and *last* [the confessing Gentiles] will be *first*), it need not imply that God has excluded *all ethnic members of Israel*. As is the case in the harshest condemnations of Israel in the OT, there is always a place for a righteous remnant which heeds God’s warning.¹³⁵ In the parable of the Shut Door and the East/West saying, we see the nascent Christian movement struggling to account for its rejection by the Jewish leadership from whom it expected succor and acceptance. Because of this experience, the early Christian movement turned to a group traditionally scorned but who now seemed most likely to accept the preaching of the early Christian movement: the Gentiles.

V. Romans 11:25-32

Our analysis of the parable of the Shut door quite naturally leads us to Rom 11:25-32, a Pauline text which with great pathos addresses the unresponsiveness of Paul’s own Jewish people to the Gospel in contrast to its positive reception by many Gentiles. Coming at the end of Paul’s emotional explanation of the hardness of elect Israel (and, ironically, the openness of the pagan Gentiles) to the Gospel in chs. 9-11, Paul makes one last effort to explain “this mystery” (11:25: τὸ μυστήριον τοῦτο) before turning to praise God’s unsearchable wisdom (i.e., the

¹³⁴ John Nolland writes, “The prophetically anticipated gathering of the dispersed People of God from the four corners of the earth will take place, but Jesus’ hearers should be warned that this great event will not take place without some surprising reversals.” Nolland, *Luke*, 735.

¹³⁵ Beasley-Murray accurately declares: “Is it not clear that in these passages Jesus is condemning his generation of Jews for rejecting the word of God presented through him, and most especially condemning their spiritual leaders and those following them? These declarations of judgment in no way excluded either the ‘little flock’ (see Luke 12:32) or those who heard and gratefully received the message of the beatitudes from participation in the kingdom of God.” Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Last Days*, 173.

doxology of 11:33-36) as the ultimate conclusion of the matter.¹³⁶ Just as in Luke's conclusion of 13:30 where the "last" (the Gentiles) becomes "first" and the "first" (hardened Israel) becomes "last," so also in Rom 11:25-32 "the status and role of Israel within the world-wide and history-long purpose of God [is] finally clarified, by an ironic eschatological reversal of the salvation-history pattern of 'Jew first and also Greek' [Rom 1:16]."¹³⁷ In short, Rom 11:25-32 is a text which, like the parable of the Tenants, the Shut Door, and the Temple episode, demonstrates that the rejection of the message of the early Christian movement by Jewish leaders (and indeed from Paul's perspective, the nation of Israel) has brought about the inclusion of the Gentiles.¹³⁸ We will analyze the motifs of Israel's rejection of Jesus and his message and Gentile inclusion in this text. However, as is clear from the usage of terms like τὸ μυστήριον (the mystery) and ἄχρι οὗ τὸ πλήρωμα (until the fullness), Rom 11:25-32 also points (in the form of apocalyptic) to the delay of the *Parousia* until the Gentiles have had a chance to respond to the Gospel.¹³⁹

Clearly the motif of the first century Jewish rejection of the early Christian message occupies a central place in Rom 9-11, of which 11:25-32 is a part.¹⁴⁰ No doubt, by the time Paul penned his Epistle to the Romans, the issue of rejection had come to the fore in the early Christian movement. C. K Barrett writes: "It must have already in the 50s been clear that only a minority

¹³⁶ C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans* (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1979), 572.

¹³⁷ James Dunn, *Romans 9-16* (WBC 38b; Dallas: Word Books, 1988), 677.

¹³⁸ Wolter argues that Luke, like Paul, "picks up the motif of obduracy on the part of the people God to explain Israel's 'utterly incomprehensible' historical refusal to believe, and in this respect he and Paul do indeed have something in common." Wolter, "Israel's Future," 317.

¹³⁹ Thomas argues, "The necessity of preaching to the Gentiles is clearly stated in Romans 10:14 ff. along with appropriate proof-texts for defending the Gentile mission (10:18-20). Romans 11 shows that the Gentile mission is in keeping with God's eternal plan and that God has not given up on Israel. That which delays Israel's final salvation is the coming of το πλήρωμα τῶν ἐθνῶν (11:25). Thus το πλήρωμα τῶν ἐθνῶν is the precondition of the end." Thompson, "The Gentile Mission," 26.

¹⁴⁰ Cilliers Breytenbach, "Eschatology in Romans," in *Eschatology of the New Testament and Some Related Documents* (ed. Jan G. van der Watt; WUNT 315; Tübingen: Mohr Seibek, 2011), 193, observes, "Those who had been elected, obtained what they have strived for, but in the future there will be an inclusion of the other, who are presently hardened (11:7)."

of Jews were accepting Jesus as Messiah. The answer to this was not to go on battering on a closed door but to turn, as Paul had done, to the Gentiles.”¹⁴¹ This rejection of the Christian message had to be explained because of the salvation-priority of Israel (e.g., Rom 11: 28-29) which the Matthean Jesus himself recognized in 10:6 and 15:24.

Paul begins to make that explanation in 11:25-26: “Israel has experienced a hardening [πώρωσις] in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.” First of all, we must note Paul is referring to a *partial* hardening of heart affecting *all of Israel* (instead of a complete hardening of part of Israel). Dunn notes, “It is not unimportant that Paul still retains a concept of Israel as a unified whole: the people suffering partial blindness, rather than only part of the people suffering blindness; even in his criticism of his people Paul still feels himself to be part of a single people.”¹⁴² Instead of focusing on the rejection of the Jewish leadership as we see in the parable of the Tenants and the Temple episode, Paul’s critique is that all of Israel experiences culpable stubbornness with respect to the message of the early Christian movement.

Second, as Cranfield notes, ἀπὸ μέρους [in part] modifies the *hardness* that precedes it in the Greek text and not Israel which comes after.¹⁴³ Thus, there remains the possibility that despite the stubbornness which affects Israel in general (i.e., Israel is only partially hardened), at least some in Israel could come to accept the Christian message. Paul has already confirmed this supposition in 11:2-5 where he cites the example of the seven thousand who had not “bowed the knee to Baal” in the time of Elijah.

¹⁴¹ Charles. K. Barrett, “The Gentile Mission,” 71.

¹⁴² Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 679.

¹⁴³ Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 575.

Thirdly, and most importantly, 11:25-26 shows that this partial hardness to the message of the early Christian movement within Israel is not coincidental; rather, it is divinely appointed.¹⁴⁴ Regarding this hardening Dunn writes, “The way that it is referred to indicates that this unbelief is not just a matter of human disobedience—a divine hardening is involved.”¹⁴⁵ This divine operation explains Paul’s appeal to the term τὸ μυστήριον, which for him refers not to enigmatic knowledge as in the mystery religions of the ancient Roman Empire, but rather an eschatological reality ordained and revealed by God.¹⁴⁶ While we cannot dwell on the meaning of the term “mystery,” we can assert that Paul considered his calling to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles directly related to “a mystery” revealed to him from God regarding the final disposition of God’s elect people.¹⁴⁷ In effect, the mystery centers on the identity of God’s people. Once they were ethnic Israelites alone. Now, in the last days by virtue of Christ’s ministry, God’s people are comprised of both Jew and Gentile.¹⁴⁸ This is especially evident in Eph 3:8 and Rom 16:25, where, as Dunn notes, “In Paul the mystery is the mystery of God’s purpose, his intention from the first to include Gentiles with Jews as his people.”¹⁴⁹ Paul provides a final piece of evidence for God’s causality in the hardening of Israel in v. 32 where God is the subject of the verb συγκλείω, which refers figuratively to the act of imprisoning or binding (in this case, “all men

¹⁴⁴ Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 713, writes, “Israel’s present hostility toward God, manifested in her general refusal of the gospel (cf. 9:30-10:21), is itself part of God’s plan, for it is the result of God’s act of hardening.”

¹⁴⁵ Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 572.

¹⁴⁶ Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 714.

¹⁴⁷ Ernest Best, “The Revelation to Evangelize the Gentiles,” *JTS* 35 (1984), 24.

¹⁴⁸ Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 2.1235, writes, “They [the mysteries] are, rather, characteristically Pauline expressions of the belief that the central gospel events themselves reveal the secret, age-old plan of God the creator, the plan for ‘the fullness of the times’, for the ‘but now’ moment, through which God would bring together all things in heaven and on earth and, in particular, would unite Jews and Gentiles in a single body.”

¹⁴⁹ Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 678.

over to disobedience”).¹⁵⁰ By this explanation, Paul informs his readers that the hardening of Israel, just as is the case with the hardening of *all people* (τοὺς πάντας in v. 32), is a divine activity *for the purpose* of (ἵνα) having mercy on them *all* (τοὺς πάντας).¹⁵¹ Thus, the historical opposition of the Jews to the Gospel (along with the resulting inclusion of the Gentiles) is bound up in the divinely ordained mystery of grace (i.e., vv. 30-32).

In the same breath with which he uses to describe the Jewish rejection of the early Christian message, Paul also takes up Gentile inclusion in 11:25, demonstrating that the two are directly related. Paul develops his argument that the Gentiles will be included as a result of Israel’s refusal to believe through his use of the metaphor of the olive tree beginning in 11:11-24.¹⁵² God has cut off the natural olive branches (i.e., the Jewish elect who have refused to accept the Gospel), and in their place has grafted in wild olive branches, which of course represent those believers who are Gentile by birth (11:17-21). However, lest the “wild olive branches” become conceited, Paul warns “one must remain faithful and dependent on God in order to be saved. In addition, he reminds his audience that even the branch that has been cut off remains elect ‘according to nature’ and as such can easily be reincorporated into Israel.”¹⁵³

The metaphor of wild olive branches being incorporated onto the olive tree that is Israel continues in 11:25 when Paul uses another weighty term, εἰσερχομαι (to come in), with reference to the fullness of Gentile nations. We have already met this image in the form of the “pilgrimage

¹⁵⁰ William F. Ardnt, *et al.*, eds., “συγκλείω,” BAGD, 774.

¹⁵¹ The question of to whom Paul is referring by the double πάντας in v. 32 is open to debate, though it most likely refers to the collected individuals from both the races of the Gentiles (i.e., τὸ πλήρωμα τῶν ἐθνῶν) and the race of Israel (v. 26). See Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 588.

¹⁵² Jason A. Staples, “What Do the Gentiles Have to Do with All Israel? A Fresh Look at Romans 11:25-27,” *JBL* 130.2 (2011), 383.

¹⁵³ Staples, “What to the Gentiles Have to Do with All Israel?” 385.

of the nations” concept in the OT and Synoptic Gospels.¹⁵⁴ Perhaps the term may come from Jesus’ sayings. Dunn argues, “Paul has used the spatial imagery of Jesus’ formulation to transform the traditional Jewish expectation that the final acceptance of the Gentiles would be a physical pilgrimage to Jerusalem.”¹⁵⁵

Staples believes the phrase “the fullness of the Gentiles entering in (τὸ πλήρωμα τῶν ἐθνῶν εἰσεέλθῃ) is a reference to Gen 48:19 where Jacob blesses Ephraim by the prophecy that “his descendants will become a group of nations (LXX: καὶ τὸ σπέρμα αὐτοῦ ἔσται εἰς πλῆθος ἐθνῶν).¹⁵⁶ While this is quite possibly a valid observation (although Paul uses πλήρωμα instead of the LXX’s πλῆθος], Staples’ assertion that the “fullness of the Gentiles” must therefore refer to the lost tribe of Ephraim (now mixed with the Gentile nations) is a stretch. Paul does not show a tendency to speculate about the disposition of the “ten lost tribes” unlike many other contemporary Jewish writers. Instead, as the “Apostle to the Gentiles,” Paul’s interest is in preaching the Gospel to non-Jews, not “partial Jews” like the lost tribe of Ephraim. If “the fullness of the Gentiles” does not have a particular referent, then it could refer to *all Gentiles* or an *elect group among the Gentiles*.¹⁵⁷

In our analysis of the themes of the rejection of Jesus and his message by many first century Jews and Gentile inclusion in Rom 11:25-32, we should note that these two realities, as important as they are, are really only secondary to Paul’s main point and overwhelming concern:

¹⁵⁴ Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 718, cites Matt 7:13; Luke 13:24; and 23:13.

¹⁵⁵ Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 680.

¹⁵⁶ Staples, “What to the Gentiles Have to Do with All Israel?” 386.

¹⁵⁷ Lietaert Peerbolte, *Paul the Missionary*, 198, notes, “The ‘fullness of the Gentiles’ would thus be this elect group taken from among the Gentiles. Yet an alternative interpretation appears more favourable. The contrast between the πλήρωμα τῶν ἐθνῶν and πᾶς Ἰσραὴλ (v. 26) strongly supports the interpretation ‘all the Gentiles’.”

in the end *all Israel will be saved*.¹⁵⁸ God uses Israel's rejection of the Gospel and the Gentiles' acceptance of it to accomplish the original election of Israel.¹⁵⁹

As we conclude our analysis of Rom 11:25-32, it is important to take note of another theme in this text which sets it apart and makes it especially important to our study: the theme of the delay of the *Parousia* as an opportunity for Gentile inclusion. Just as in Mark 13:10 ("And the gospel must first be preached to all nations"), the delay described by Paul in 11:25-32 relates to the time that God, in his mercy, provides for the Gentiles to be included among the elect/called.¹⁶⁰ In fact, Rom 11:25-32 has been called a "commentary on Mark 13:10."¹⁶¹

The fact that the inclusion of the Gentiles has a temporal relationship to the eschaton is confirmed by the phrase ἄχρι οὗ which is temporally significant.¹⁶² Cranfield argues in 11:25-26 we see "three successive stages of Divine salvation," the hardening (or rejection) of the Jews with regard to the Gospel message, the inclusion the Gentiles, and finally, when the full number of Gentiles have responded, the salvation of the Jewish nation.¹⁶³ All three of these stages are

¹⁵⁸ Perhaps Paul's heartfelt concern for his fellow Jews can help us understand why he feels so strongly compelled to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles (i.e., 1 Cor 9:16). By preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles he hastens the salvation of his own people. In the words of Martin Goodman, "Paul evidently felt under the compulsion to preach—'Woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel'—in part because he espoused an eschatological theory that the Gentiles must be 'won' to Christ primarily on the grounds that only once this was done would God bring about the salvation of Israel." Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem*, 517.

¹⁵⁹ Dunn writes with respect to v. 29, "Paul's unwillingness to concede that God could have abandoned Israel first raising the question regarding Israel's rejection of the gospel and finally overwhelming it. But now at last he states in clear and unambiguous terms what is obviously one of the basic postulates of his faith as both Jew and Christian, reaffirmed no doubt by the mystery revealed to him—that God is faithful to the covenant relationship he first established with Abraham and his seed. God has not withdrawn from the commitment to Israel into which he entered at his own initiative." Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 694.

¹⁶⁰ James Dunn notes the wordplay Paul utilizes throughout Rom 9-11 which centers on the couplets: ἐκλογή/κλησις ("choice/call") and ἔλεος/ἐλεέω ("mercy"). Thus, because of God's mercy (ἐλεος), the called (κλησις), or people of Israel, have been excluded so that those who were not called (the Gentiles) may now be included. Yet, as Paul insists, Israel will be saved in the eschaton. See Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 677.

¹⁶¹ Thompson, "Gentile Mission," 26.

¹⁶² Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 680.

¹⁶³ Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 575. Cranfield writes, "Paul's meaning is not that Israel is in part hardened during the time in which the fullness of the Gentiles is coming in, but that the hardening will last until the

successive temporal movements that occur one after another and which are indeed dependent on each other.

Another indication that Paul has in mind a delay before the eschatological consummation is the reference to the *fullness* of the Gentiles entering in (τὸ πλήρωμα τῶν ἐθνῶν εἰσεέλθῃ). In addition to merely referring to a quantity (e.g., Col 2:9), the term πλήρωμα also signifies a process in time that comes to completion (e.g., Gal 4:4).¹⁶⁴ Thus, Cranfield prefers to see “the fullness of the Gentiles entering in” as an event that will take place in the course of history.¹⁶⁵ This indicates the passing of a significant period of time, or delay.

Finally, coming as it does after ἄχρι οὗ, the phrase, καὶ οὕτως, which modifies “all Israel will be saved,” also has temporal significance (even if the primary meaning of the phrase is an adverbial modification of σωθήσεται).¹⁶⁶ In other words, “And thus all Israel will be saved,” depends on the temporal completion of the full number of Gentiles “entering in.” In summary, the term “fullness of the Gentiles,” along with the divinely ordained process of hardening shows Paul’s “apocalyptic periodization of history” in which certain events must come to pass before the end. According to Rom 11:25-32, those events are (1) the partial hardening of Israel, (2) the coming in of the fullness of the Gentiles, and finally, (3) the salvation of the Israel.¹⁶⁷ Subsequently, the delay of the *Parousia* is a divinely appointed time for outreach to the Gentiles, culminating in the *Parousia* and deliverance of Israel from spiritual hardness.¹⁶⁸

fullness of the Gentiles comes in. The entry of the fullness of the Gentiles will be the event which will mark the end of Israel’s hardening.”

¹⁶⁴ Arndt, *et al.*, eds., “πλήρωμα,” BAGD, 672.

¹⁶⁵ Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 575.

¹⁶⁶ Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 681

¹⁶⁷ Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 575.

¹⁶⁸ Lietaert Peerbolte, *Paul the Missionary*, 198.

The significance of the connection between delay, the rejection of Jesus and his message by many first century Jews, and Gentile inclusion in Rom 11:25-32 is great. Paul has already articulated the “natural order of salvation” in Rom 1:16: “first the Jew, and then the Greek” (Ἰουδαίῳ τε πρῶτον καὶ Ἑλληνι). As we noted in Chapter Two, a pure and obedient Israel was supposed to represent YHWH to the nations so that they would come streaming in to Zion on the Day of the Lord. The hardness of Israel (though effected by God), however, has caused a fundamental inversion in this salvation-historical framework. Like Mark 13:10, Paul argues in Rom 11:25-32 that God has instituted an eschatological delay to allow for this inversion between Israel and the Gentiles to run its course. Munck summarizes this significance well:

It is Paul’s hope that his work among the Gentiles, and their following of the Gospel may rouse this zeal [of Jews who rejected the Gospel], so that he may save some of them. And when the fullness of the Gentiles is come, when the Gospel has been preached to all nations, then the hour of salvation will come to Israel. God will remember all his promises to the chosen, but faithless people, and he will change their destiny, and the whole of Israel shall be saved. This is the culmination of the history of salvation, as with the earliest disciples, but the order is different. The Jews’ refusal of the Gospel leads to its being offered to the Gentiles, and their acceptance of it brings about the conversion of Israel. In Paul’s view, therefore, the mission to the Gentiles comes first, and Israel’s conversion second.¹⁶⁹

Before the eschatological consummation of the *Parousia*, the full number of the Gentiles must come in, and *then*, and only *then*, will hardened Israel follow the Gentiles into the Kingdom. The fact that Paul has the *Parousia* in mind in Rom 11:25-32 as “the end” of the salvation-historical inversion becomes apparent in the quotation of Isa 59:20: “The Deliverer will come to Zion.”¹⁷⁰

Interestingly, this delay and subsequent inversion in the salvation-history order presented in Rom 11:25-32 has significance for Paul’s own ministry as his focus on the imminence of the

¹⁶⁹ Munck, “Israel and the Gentiles in the New Testament,” 34.

¹⁷⁰ Bornkamm, “End Expectation and the Church in Matthew,” 51.

Parousia (expressed in for example, in the Thessalonian and Corinthian correspondences) gives way to a focus on what must be accomplished before it (i.e., Gentile inclusion in Romans).¹⁷¹ Because of the delay and the hardness of Israel, Paul sees his ministry among the Gentiles as implicated in the final salvation of his own biological race for whose callousness to the Gospel message he laments in Rom 9-11.¹⁷²

VI. Acts 28:17-30

The last text which we would like to analyze in this chapter is Acts 28:17-28, a text that compellingly links the rejection of the early Christian movement (by at least *some* first century Jews) to the inclusion of the Gentiles. In this text, which functions as the conclusion to Luke-Acts,¹⁷³ Paul finally arrives in Rome after being delayed by a shipwreck and subsequent wintering on Malta. Upon arrival, he is put under house arrest (28:16) and summons Rome's Jewish leaders to meet with him in three days' time.

¹⁷¹ Glasson, *The Second Advent*, 208.

¹⁷² See Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 93, "But Paul's understanding of his own role in the final stage of history which emerges especially in Romans, allows us to be more specific about what the expectation was. Paul describes himself as engaged in the mission to the Gentiles. He is an apostle of the last days, preparing 'the offering of the Gentiles' so that it may be acceptable (Rom 15.16) . . . The expected scheme, however, has gone awry. Israel is not established and victorious. By in large, in fact, Israel has rejected Jesus as Messiah. Paul thus must revise the scheme: first the Gentiles will come in, and then, as a result of the Gentile mission, Israel will be saved (Rom. 11.13-16; 11.26f; 11.30f.). The revision of the scheme proves its existence and establishes beyond question the eschatological setting of the work of the apostles." Bornkamm concurs, "The imminent expectation of the parousia inevitably lost something of its pressing immediacy as a result of such a world-wide 'missionary programme'. The task of mission to the Gentiles intervened as a *condition sine qua non* between the direct presence and the return of the exalted Christ. This is clear from a comparison between the traditional I Thess. 5.2, 'the Day of the Lord comes like a thief in the night'—here it is still quite impossible to calculate the end, though it is threateningly near—and Rom. 13.11: 'Now salvation is nearer than when we first believed (i.e., almost twenty-five years ago); the night is far spent, the day is at hand.' The final terminus has indeed come nearer, but first Paul must complete his missionary work in the West as he has already done so in the East." Bornkamm, "End Expectation," 51.

¹⁷³ We have no wish to enter into the debate regarding whether 28:17-31 is the conclusion of Luke-Acts. Many hypotheses have been put forward to account for what some consider an "abrupt" ending. In the absence of evidence of another ending in the extant manuscripts, Joseph Fitzmyer's assessment is most helpful: "The upshot of all this is that one has to reckon with the end of Acts as it is in all the manuscripts that have come down to us. The ending is that which Luke planned for his literary composition, for his story of how apostolic testimony to Jesus Christ was carried to 'the end of the earth.'" Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 792.

In the first, surprisingly irenic, scene of our text (vv. 17-22), Paul presents himself and his situation to the Jewish leaders summoned to his place of confinement.¹⁷⁴ The irenic nature of his first conversation is surprising for two reasons. First, Paul's incarceration was initiated by the Jewish ruling authorities in Jerusalem, a fact that Paul himself admits in this text. Secondly, some scholars have claimed that the text in question (28:17-30) is the capstone of Lukan "hostility" toward the Jews, a point which could be debated given the positive reaction of at least a few Roman Jews in v. 24a to Paul's exhortation.¹⁷⁵ After he declares that "it is because of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain (v. 20)," the Jewish leaders inform Paul that they have received no word from Jerusalem regarding him, but they are indeed interested in his message since they have heard "that people everywhere are talking against this sect" (v. 22).

As has been the general pattern in Acts, Paul's presentation of the Gospel message to the Jewish leaders of Rome creates both positive reception and wholesale rejection. After an entire day spent trying to convince these Jewish leaders of the Christian message via arguments from the Law and Prophets, Paul's results were mixed.¹⁷⁶ When those Jews who responded positively argue with those who rejected Paul's message, a dispute erupts and becomes the occasion for Paul to deliver his euphemistic "one word" (v. 25, ῥῆμα ἓν) of criticism (vv. 25-28) against his Jewish opponents. H. van de Sandt rightly concludes those Roman Jews who have rejected Paul's preaching in our text become literary foils for all Jews who have refused the Christian

¹⁷⁴ See also Acts 13:43; 14:1; and 21:20 for an irenic presentation of Jews.

¹⁷⁵ J. T. Sanders, *The Jews in Luke-Acts*, (London: SCM Press, 1987), 80-83. For a summary and evaluation the position that 28:17-30 is the capstone of Lukan anti-Judaism, see also James Dunn, *The Partings*, 198-200. While rejecting the idea that Luke was "hostile" to the Jews, Dunn recognizes that in Luke-Acts, Jewish rejection is one of the primary and most important subjects addressed: "His [Luke's] purpose was to present salvation to his readers, with Acts offering 'the confirmation of the gospel,' helping the church to cope with the problem of rejection of the gospel by 'the Jews,' and showing how the new people of God is brought together." I. H. Marshall, "Israel and the Story of Salvation," in *Jesus and the Heritage of Israel* (ed. David P. Moessner; Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International, 1999), 342.

¹⁷⁶ Luke writes in v. 24 that "some believed while others did not" (μὲν ἐπείθοντο τοῖς λεγομένοις, οἱ δὲ ἠπίσταντο).

message and thus become the objects of Paul's critique.¹⁷⁷ Evidence for this position is Paul's declaration in 28:25, "The Holy Spirit spoke the truth to *your forefathers* [emphasis mine]." This critique shows that the Roman Jews' refusal to believe Paul's preaching resembles the failure of their "stiff-necked" and "hard-hearted" ancestors to hear and obey *Torah*.¹⁷⁸ Furthermore, in Acts Paul reinforces the judgment on the Jewish leadership implied in this declaration by the use of καλῶς ("correctly"), which legitimizes the Holy Spirit's judgement of both the obdurate Jews of Isaiah's time and those of Paul's time.

The judgment (vv. 26-27) itself is a nearly verbatim quotation¹⁷⁹ of Isa 6:9-10, a well-known and frequently cited text in the early Christian movement used to reprimand unbelieving Jews for their obduracy. Fitzmyer writes, "This text of Isaiah was often used in early Christian preaching when the refusal to accept the gospel confronted those who were proclaiming it."¹⁸⁰ Thus, the Isaiah text appears often in the New Testament (see John 12:39-40; Rom 11:8; Mark 8:17-18), most notably in the Parable of the Sower (Mark 4:12//Matt 13:14-15//Luke 8:10). Each time it is used (with the exception of Mark 8:17-18 where Jesus uses it to criticize the hard-headedness of the disciples regarding the feeding miracles), Isa 6:9-10 is employed in reference to the rejection of Jesus and his message by Jewish opponents. The context of 6:9-10 in the book of Isaiah is another decisive factor for its meaning in Acts 28. In chapter six, God commissions

¹⁷⁷ H. van de Sandt, "Acts 28,28: No Salvation for the People of Israel? An Answer in the Perspective of the LXX," *ETL* 71 (1994): 341.

¹⁷⁸ See Stephen's similar denouncement of the Jewish leaders in Acts 7:51-53: "You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised. You are just like your ancestors: You always resist the Holy Spirit! Was there ever a prophet your ancestors did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him—you who have received the law that was given through angels but have not obeyed it." Note the similarity between the appeal to the Holy Spirit in both 7:51 and 28:25.

¹⁷⁹ van de Sandt notes that there is a small change in order between the words "go" and "this people" in Luke's quotation in v. 26, (*πορεύθητι πρὸς τὸν λαὸν τοῦτον καὶ εἰπὸν*) and the LXX rendering of Isa 9:6 (*πορεύθητι καὶ εἰπὸν τῷ λαῷ τούτῳ*). van de Sandt, "Acts 28,28," 342.

¹⁸⁰ Fitzmyer, *Acts of the Apostles*, 795.

Isaiah to warn his peers of the coming judgment on them as a result of their stubbornness, rebelliousness and heart-heartedness toward YHWH. It is very possible that the prophetic commissioning of Ezekiel (chs. 2-3), which shares the same general theme and tenor of Isaiah's, could also be behind Acts 28:17-30.¹⁸¹ Whatever the case, Acts' quotation of Isa 6:9-10 in 28:26-27 draws the unmistakable conclusion that the Jewish leaders who reject the Christian message are actually rejecting God himself just as their forefathers did seven centuries earlier during the ministry of Isaiah of Jerusalem.

As we have seen so often, part and parcel with the rejection of the early Christian message is the appearance of the theme of Gentile inclusion.¹⁸² Beginning in 28:28, Paul underscores the result of the Jewish leaders' rejection of the Christian message with a causal transition connected to the foregoing Isaiah quotation, γνωστὸν οὖν ἔστω ὑμῖν ("Therefore, let it be known to you").¹⁸³ The important content of Acts' transition is the reality that "God's salvation has been sent to the Gentiles" (τοῖς ἔθνεσιν ἀπεστάλη τοῦτο τὸ σωτήριον τοῦ θεοῦ), a

¹⁸¹ van de Sandt, "Acts 28,28," 347.

¹⁸² Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem*, 517, claims that the presentation in Acts of Paul preaching to the Jews first and then to the Gentiles after the Jews' failure to positively respond is characteristic of Acts but not of the Pauline Epistles: "According to Acts, Paul tried first to bring his message to the Jews in each place, and it was only when that failed that he turned to the local gentiles, but in his own letters he makes no reference to such failures, addressing himself only the gentile Christian communities he founded." However, as we have mentioned in our treatment of Acts 28:17-30, Luke does not depict Paul as completely "failing" in his efforts to attract Law-observant Jews or Jewish-Christians. Contrary to Goodman's assertion that Paul's preaching to Jews is a characteristic of only of Acts and not the Pauline Epistles, we can posit Paul's autobiographical note in 1 Cor 9:19-20, "Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law." Apparently, Paul must have had some success as he counts many Jewish Christians as his collaborators in the greeting sections of his epistles.

¹⁸³ In Acts, Luke employs this phrase as an introduction to a decisive divine revelation. For example, see 2:14 (τοῦτο ὑμῖν γνωστὸν ἔστω) which is part of Peter's Pentecost sermon; 4:10 (γνωστὸν ἔστω πᾶσιν ὑμῖν) which is part of Peter's speech before the Sanhedrin; and 13:38 which is part of Paul's message in the synagogue of Psidian Antioch (γνωστὸν οὖν ἔστω ὑμῖν). Interestingly, immediately after using this formula, Paul announces that because of Jewish opposition he is turning to the Gentiles in 13:46.

phrase that calls to mind several OT references to Gentile inclusion like Ps 67:3 and 98:2.¹⁸⁴ From the rejection of the Christian message in 28:24-27, Paul draws a “therefore,” legitimizing the inclusion of the Gentiles in the early Christian community. After his solemn declaration “therefore,” Paul issues a “prophecy” at the end of v. 28 about those Gentiles (which by Luke’s time had already become reality): “And they [the Gentiles] will listen” (αὐτοὶ καὶ ἀκούσονται). Thus, not only is Gentile inclusion legitimated, it is effectively a *fait accompli* despite that fact Acts uses the future indicative tense in v. 28. As if to further underscore the point made in v. 24 about those Jews who rejected the Christian message, the Majority Text adds v. 29 which must be omitted on the basis of decisive manuscript evidence as most modern English versions have done.¹⁸⁵ Since so many of the Jewish leaders Paul encountered in Rome rejected the message, God’s salvation has therefore been sent (ἀποστέλλω), like the Apostle Paul himself, to the Gentiles.¹⁸⁶

According to Frank Stagg, this association between the rejection of the first century Jewish leadership and the consequent positive reception of the Gentiles is exactly the main point of Luke’s second volume: “Writing at a time when Christianity had become predominantly a gentile community, he [Luke] demonstrates that under God’s impulse it had come to include Samaritans, God-fearing gentiles already drawn to the synagogues, and converts directly from paganism.”¹⁸⁷ For this reason, the final word of Luke-Acts, ἀκωλύτως, referring to the Gospel’s

¹⁸⁴ Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, 796. While Fitzmyer cites only Ps 67:3 (LXX: 66:3: ἐν πᾶσιν ἔθνεσιν τὸ σωτήριόν σου), Ps 98:2 (LXX 97:2: ἐγνώρισεν κύριος τὸ σωτήριον αὐτοῦ, ἐναντίον τῶν ἐθνῶν ἀπεκάλυψεν τὴν δικαιοσύνην αὐτοῦ) seems just as likely to be in Luke’s mind.

¹⁸⁵ Verse 29 reads, “After he had said this, the Jews left arguing vigorously among themselves.” The Majority (℞) Text includes this verse, underscoring the ongoing disagreement between the Jewish leaders of Rome summoned by Paul and whose disagreement occasions Paul’s “one word” denouncement in 28:25. Verse 29 is absent in other more authoritative the manuscripts such as ℞^{74vid} א A B E Ψ 048 33 81 1175 1739 2464 *pc* and others.

¹⁸⁶ van de Sandt, “Acts 28,28,” 347.

¹⁸⁷ Frank Stagg, “The Unhindered Gospel,” *RevExp* 70.4 (1974), 461.

“unhindered” spread, vividly paints a portrait of the success of Gentile inclusion in the face of the rejection of many first century Jews. The “unhindered” nature of the Gospel’s spread to which Acts refers in 28:31 does not suggest the Roman state’s unsuccessful opposition to the Gospel because, as King Agrippa had told Festus in 27:32, Paul could have been released “if he had not appealed to Caesar.” Rather, the “unhindered” nature¹⁸⁸ of the early Christian message refers to the failure of the Jewish opposition to stifle and squelch the Gospel’s miraculous spread among those Gentiles and willing Jews who heard it and gratefully accepted it.¹⁸⁹ Thus, in the final pericope of Luke-Acts, again we find a discussion of the issue of Jewish hardening and Gentile inclusion, making a point which by this time would have been familiar to the readers. Because of the opposition of a large number of Jews, Gentiles have been included in the early Christian community and its message.

VII. Concluding Remarks Regarding the Jewish Rejection of Jesus and Gentile Inclusion

It is no overstatement to say that the first century Jewish leadership’s rejection of the message of the early Christian movement (and the resulting rejection of Christianity by first century Judaism in the ensuing decades) was a traumatic and course-altering experience. There are many reasons for the opposition to early Christianity, but greatest among them was the fundamental dispute about the nature and identity of the Christ.¹⁹⁰ Another substantial point of

¹⁸⁸ Compare Acts 28:31 with 1 Thess 2:14-16: “You suffered from your own countrymen the same things those churches suffered from the Jews, who killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets and also drove us out. They displease God and are hostile to all men in their effort to keep us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved [κωλύοντων ἡμᾶς τοῖς ἔθνεσιν λαλῆσαι ἵνα σωθῶσιν].” In this Pauline text, the Jews are “hindering” (κωλύοντων) Paul’s effort to include the Gentiles. See Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 282, for further discussion of these verses.

¹⁸⁹ Stagg, “The Unhindered Gospel,” 461.

¹⁹⁰ Flusser, *Judaism*, 620, notes, “For the majority of Jews, even the Christology contained in the New Testament was clearly unacceptable, not only because such a belief was unusual, but also because the whole cosmic drama of Christ and the superhuman nature of the task of Christ was in disharmony with the Jewish belief in the God who is One and whose name is One.”

dispute was the role of *Torah* in the early Christian community.¹⁹¹ While our study focuses on the delay of the *Parousia* as a fundamental cause of Gentile inclusion, we cannot neglect to mention the powerful influence of the experience of rejection on the early Christian movement. However, as we conclude this chapter, we need to briefly make several remarks as to the character of this rejection.

First, we need to note that, at least during the first decades of the early Christian movement, there was little difference between first century Judaism and Palestinian-Jewish Christianity. As David Klinghoffer explains, members of the early Christian movement very much resembled their Jewish peers in nearly all respects.

[They] Awaited the imminent return of the Christ, their Messiah, not unlike the way other Jews awaited the Messiah's first and only coming; but apart from this they were practicing Jews, worshipping in the Jewish Temple, eating only kosher food, circumcising their newborn boys, living the lives of Jews quite separately from anyone of gentile birth. Their 'bishop,' James, appears in ancient Christian accounts as a most pious and observant Jew.¹⁹²

In effect, "Christianity" (as it came to be later called in Antioch according to Acts) was a subgroup within Judaism that only slowly, and through many steps, came to be separate from the strands of first century Judaism which evolved into rabbinic Judaism in the second-century.¹⁹³ The slowness of this separation can be attributed not just to theology but to the basic realities of life in the first century—news traveled slowly and only a slim percentage of Jews had even heard anything of Jesus and his message.¹⁹⁴ However, even with these qualifications, we must note that the central personality of the early Christian movement was put to death by the Roman

¹⁹¹ Bird, "Jesus as a Law-Breaker," 6.

¹⁹² David Klinghoffer, *Why the Jews Rejected Jesus* (New York: Doubleday, 2005), 91.

¹⁹³ This is a main thesis of James's Dunn's influential book, *The Partings of the Ways*. See Dunn, *The Partings*, xi.

¹⁹⁴ Klinghoffer, *Why the Jews Rejected Jesus*, 47.

government at the instigation of the Jewish religious leadership of Jerusalem for the offense of blasphemy (an offense that Jesus himself acknowledged according to Mark 14:61-65//Matt 26:63-68//Luke 22:66-71).¹⁹⁵ The historical fact of Jesus' persecution and death provided "momentum" for the eventual rejection of the Christian movement by first century Judaism.¹⁹⁶ Nevertheless, at least in the first years following the crucifixion, there was little outward difference between the early Christian movement and other first century Jewish groups.¹⁹⁷

Secondly, we should note that while a great many first century Jews rejected the early Christian movement, there was always, as the NT attests, a "righteous remnant" of Jews who responded positively within the early Christian movement.¹⁹⁸ Paul counts himself a member of this group in Rom 11:1-5 when he says, "So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace."¹⁹⁹ This remnant of Israel, represented by Jesus' earliest disciples, formed the Jewish core

¹⁹⁵ Darrel Bock writes, "So was Jesus crucified because he claimed to be Messiah? Was that the core of the blasphemy of the church? This is how some challenge the scene's historical value, but that is not what is going on, even though it is the political charge that is highlighted before Pilate . . . But Jesus' reply responds to this messianic query [of his Sanhedrin interlocutors] *and yet does even more*. It represents a severe assault on the sensibilities of the Jewish leaders at two levels. First, the reply speaks of an exalted Jesus who sees himself as too close to God in the leadership's view. Second, he makes claims as a ruler or judge who one day will render a verdict and/or experience a vindication against the very leadership that sees itself as appointed by God." Darrell Bock, "Jesus as Blasphemer" in *Who Do My Opponents Say That I Am?* (LNTS 327; ed. Scot McKnight and Joseph B. Modica; London: T & T Clark, 2008), 90-91.

¹⁹⁶ According to Klinghoffer, "Of course, the new religion [Christianity] did emerge as a fully separate entity right away—that would happen later, when a final break was made with the Jewish mother faith. But the seeds of it were planted, one might speculate, as soon as the presumed Messiah died on the cross." Klinghoffer, *Why the Jews Rejected Jesus*, 89.

¹⁹⁷ David Sim advances the interesting thesis that the hostile attitude taken by the early Christian community against its Jewish opponents is proof not of a large distance between the two, but rather of a close relationship. Sim observes with regard to Matthew, "It is now well recognized that polemical and stereotypical language such as we find in Matthew does not reflect the distance between the two parties. On the contrary, it indicates both physical and ideological proximity between the disputing groups, since its very purpose is to distance one party from the other. A general sociological rule of thumb is that the closer the relationship between dissenting groups, the more intense the conflict and the sharper the resulting polemic." Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 121.

¹⁹⁸ Early Jewish Christians were not the only ones who saw themselves as a "righteous remnant." This idea also appeared in other first-century Jewish groups such as the Essenes. See Witherington III, *Jesus, Paul and the End of the World*, 129-130.

¹⁹⁹ Lietaert Peerbolte, *Paul the Missionary*, 150, writes, "For Paul's view of his own position this concept of the church as the chosen remnant of Israel into which the Gentiles are welcomed, is of great importance. The

of the early Christian movement.²⁰⁰ Thus, as Howard Marshall accurately observes, the early Christian community maintains its orientation to ethnic Israel, “The church or the new Israel consist of believing Jews and Gentiles; the disciples’ mission is to all nations, which includes the Jewish nation.”²⁰¹ In the beginning of this chapter we discussed the Nazarenes, Palestinian Jewish Christians originating from the Jerusalem who were scattered during the Jewish War, the subsequent sacking of Jerusalem and the Bar-Kokhba Revolt of the first-half of the second-century.²⁰² Evidence from Gentile Christian authors such as Jerome and others also sheds light upon the Jewish remnant that made up a considerable portion of the early Christian movement. Finally, ancient sources indicate the presence of Jewish Christians by virtue of the historical record of continued opposition to Jewish-Christianity found in later Rabbinical Jewish writings. However, the anti-Christian polemics in these Rabbinical writings were later “hidden” so as not to enflame anti-Semitism in the Gentile-Christian communities where many Jews found themselves in the centuries following Constantine.²⁰³

But the most accessible evidence for the continued presence of Jews in the early Christian movement, even during the heady days of the Gentile mission, comes from the NT itself. In the early Christian movement, the phrase, “First to the Jew, then to the Gentile,” was not merely suggestion (e.g., Rom 1:16); rather, based on evidence from the Gospels, Acts, and the Pauline

existence of the church did not imply a sharp break with Israel—instead, the church should be seen as Israel’s final remnant.”

²⁰⁰ Cadoux, *The Historical Mission of Jesus Christ*, 146.

²⁰¹ I. Howard Marshall, *New Testament Theology* (Downer’s Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity Press, 2004), 124.

²⁰² Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity*, 108-109.

²⁰³ See Klinghoffer, *Why the Jews Rejected Jesus*, 71-77 and 141-142, for a helpful summary of evidence from the Talmud and other ancient Jewish sources that criticize Jesus and his movement. References to Jesus of Nazareth were subsequently removed by rabbis to avoid providing a pretext for anti-Semitic attacks.

Epistles, it was in fact an *evangelistic strategy* predicated on Israel's salvation-priority.

Ferdinand Hahn writes,

This is a matter of recognizing the priority of the choice of Israel—a priority that is taken into account in the Church's mission, too. The phrase *proton Ioudaiois* which Paul uses so frequently has its root here, and was adopted but not created by him . . . Here we must point out that not only Paul but other New Testament writers adopted this principle, especially Matthew and Luke; in Acts it became so much a formal pattern that Paul is not allowed to go to the Gentiles till he has been rebuffed by the Jews.²⁰⁴

Just as Jesus was a Jew who instructed his disciples to “Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel (Matt 10:6),” so also Paul and the other Jewish Christians preached, in the first place, to “the lost sheep of Israel” wherever they were found. In effect, the early Christian movement, even at the time of the writing of many of the NT documents, was essentially a sub-group of first century Judaism populated by many ethnic Jews and an ever-increasing number of Gentiles.²⁰⁵ A “faithful remnant” of believing Jews made up the nucleus of the early Christian community even as more and more Gentiles affiliated themselves with Jesus, the Jewish Messiah.²⁰⁶ Despite the “hardness” of first century Jews to the early Christian message, “Israel in the flesh” continued to receive the message just as the Gentiles.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁴ Hahn, *Mission*, 75.

²⁰⁵ James Dunn argues that early Christianity in its critique of “normative Judaism” was really no different than the other sects of Judaism which were attempts to reform Judaism like the Qumran community. See Dunn, *Partings*, 189.

²⁰⁶ Klinghoffer divides first century Jewish Christianity into several groups: “This ‘Jewish Christianity’ [the movement led by James, the brother of Jesus, in Jerusalem] soon withered into a mere heresy in the wider gentile church and within several centuries would be totally extinct. At the other end of the spectrum, we find those followers of Jesus shaped by the writing of the apostle Paul . . . They really begin to deserve the epithet ‘Christian.’ One such category of *minim*, called the Nazarenes, observed the commandments, worshipped Jesus as the Son of God, and also accepted Paul as an authoritative teacher, which the Ebionites did not.” Klinghoffer, *Why the Jews Rejected Jesus*, 93.

²⁰⁷ Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, 170-171: “Does this mean that the mission to the Jews no longer continues? The point is debated, but the more probably view is that God's salvation remains available to any Jews who will repent and believe the good news.”

A good example of the existence of a “righteous remnant” of believing Jews within the early Christian movement is the Gospel of Matthew. It is true that certain modern commentators argue the Gospel of Matthew is a Gentile-Christian polemic against Judaism based on the vigorous denunciation of Jews who reject Jesus and his message within.²⁰⁸ However, Matthew’s Gospel displays a great concern for *Torah* and typically Jewish issues throughout, as if Matthew was written by a Jewish-Christian, living in a Jewish-Christian community, for the purposes of explaining Jewish-Christian convictions to a first century Jewish environment increasingly hostile to Christianity.²⁰⁹ From a certain perspective, the existence of Matthew’s Gospel is evidence for a “faithful remnant” in broader first century Judaism that had, in large part, rejected the early Christian message.²¹⁰

Thirdly and finally, we must make a note about the “language” used to speak about Jewish rejection in the texts we have analyzed above and others which we have not studied. There is a general tendency in the NT to utilize overstatement, hyperbole and a certain amount of

²⁰⁸ See Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity*, 559-560: “Matthew’s is the only synoptic Gospel in which Israel as a whole is dispossessed and Gentiles take its place. This is not a Jewish Christian standpoint but an extreme position of a Gentile Christian. In asserting that Israel, the ‘sons of the kingdom’, are condemned to hell and that the Gentiles will be heirs of the kingdom of God, Matthew is of course far more extreme than Paul and even more simplistic than John . . . Thus we cannot avoid the conclusion that Matthew was not a Jewish Christian but Gentile who wrote his Gospel after the destruction of the Temple.”

²⁰⁹ Dunn writes: “In the debate as to whether Matthew is writing *intra muros* or *extra muros*, therefore, the evidence on the whole seems to favour *the former*. No doubt Matthew’s opponents and the opponents of Matthew’s community (the Pharisees and ‘their scribes’) regarded them as ‘outsiders’, meaning outside the walls of (early rabbinic) Judaism. But Matthew still speaks as an ‘insider’ and is attempting to portray a Jesus who would be attractive to others who also considered themselves ‘insiders’. In other words, once again we seem to find ourselves confronted with the situation where the narrowing channels of rabbinic Judaism and Christianity respectively were still in competition for the head waters flowing from the broader channels of second temple Judaism.” Dunn, *Partings*, 205-206.

²¹⁰ As for the date of the final break between Christianity and Judaism, Klinghoffer cites a second century rabbi, Rabbi Tarphon, who says “If he were being chased by an enemy and his life were in danger, he would flee for safety into a pagan temple but would give up his life before entering a house of *minim*, a Jewish-Christian church.” According to Klinghoffer, the beginning of the final rift happened 10 years after the destruction of the Second Temple with the introduction of the infamous Twelfth Benediction (which really was a curse on the *minim*, or heretics). Klinghoffer, *Why the Jews Rejected Jesus*, 116-117.

imprecision with regard to scope of first century Jewish rejection of the early Christian movement.

A good example is Acts 18:1-8 in which Paul preaches to Corinthian Jews every Sabbath, trying to convince them that Jesus is Christ (18:4). At a certain point Silas and Timothy arrive from Macedonia, allowing Paul to dedicate all of his free-time (when not plying his trade of tent-making according to 18:3) to evangelizing his fellow Jews. When his efforts fail, Paul shakes out his clothes (ἐκτιναζάμενος τὰ ἱμάτια) in witness against the Jews and indulges in hyperbole: “Your blood be on your own heads! I am clear of my responsibility. From now on I will go to the Gentiles (18:6).”²¹¹ Ironically, Paul then left the home of Priscilla and Aquila (Jewish-Christian converts) and moved to the house of Gentile God-fearer (Titius Justus), *on the other side of the synagogue*. During his stay he converts the synagogue ruler, Crispus, along with his entire household. There can be little doubt that Crispus, as a ἀρχισυνάγωγος (charged with organization of and leading of the synagogue services), was a practicing Jew along with the rest of his family and many in his household (who were all baptized in 18:8).²¹² We may ask, if Paul did indeed turn away from the Jews as “the Apostle to the Gentiles” (i.e. Rom 11:13), what was he doing converting Crispus and living next-door to a synagogue?²¹³ We may take the Lukan Paul’s

²¹¹ Compare Paul’s prophetic action of “shaking out [ἐκτινάσσω] his clothes” in Acts 18:6 with Mark 6:11//Matt 10:14//Luke 9:5 where Jesus commands his disciples “to shake off” (ἐκτινάσσω=Matthew and Mark; ἀποτινάσσω=Luke) the dust from their feet if a Jewish town will not receive them or their message. Compare also the Jewish “self-maledictory oath” before Pilate’s “hand-washing” in Matt 27:25 (“Let his blood be upon us and our children [τὸ αἷμα αὐτοῦ ἐφ’ ἡμᾶς καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ τέκνα ἡμῶν]”) with Paul’s own prophetic “hand-washing” (literally: “Clean I am” [καθαρὸς ἐγὼ]) in 18:6 (“Your blood be upon your own heads [τὸ αἷμα ὑμῶν ἐπὶ τὴν κεφαλὴν ὑμῶν]”). Fitzmyer sees a parallels in Paul’s statement to the Jews of Pisidian Antioch in Acts 13:46 and Paul’s farewell to the Ephesian elders in 20:26. Fitzmyer, *Acts of the Apostles*, 627. See also 2 Sam 1:16, “For David had said to him, ‘Your blood be on your own head’” and Ezek 33:5, “Since they heard the sound of the trumpet but did not heed the warning, their blood will be on their own head.”

²¹² Fitzmyer, *Acts of the Apostles*, 510.

²¹³ C. K. Barrett, *The Acts of the Apostles* (2 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 2:866, argues for a note of finality in Paul’s declaration, “It is not clear why Paul should shake out his clothes, though it is clear enough that he means to break off relations with the Jews against whom he performs the symbolic action.” However, Barrett later observes that the suspension of relations is certainly not permanent, “Luke evidently thinks of it as a frequently

declaration in 18:6 as an overstatement.²¹⁴ Despite his harsh declaration, Paul is not finished with the Jews of Corinth.²¹⁵

Another obvious example is Paul's "one word" (ῥῆμα ἓν) of prophetic criticism against the visiting Roman Jews to whom he preached in Acts 28:25-27. He directs the criticism without distinction, even though some of the Jews to whom he preached were persuaded by his teachings and thereafter fell into sharp dispute with Paul's Jewish opponents. However, the denunciation placed in Paul's mouth by Luke is not qualified, though we can assume that it is meant to apply only to all those Jews who rejected the message of the early Christian movement. Again, we see the Lukan Paul engaging in hyperbole with regard to his condemnation of the Jews.

As the examples we have produced show, there is a great deal of hyperbole and imprecision when it comes to the discussion of the rejection of the early Christian movement by many Jews in the NT. Despite the strong language utilized against such first century Jewish doubters, the NT still holds open a place for a faithful Jewish remnant in a movement that was becoming increasingly Gentile.

In the foregoing chapter we have analyzed several texts (parable of the Wicked Tenants [Mark 12:1-2//Matt 21:33-46//Luke 20:9-19], the episode of Jesus at the Temple [Matt 21:12-16//Mark 11:15-18//Luke 19:45-47], the "East/West" saying [Matt 8:11-12//Luke 13:28-29] and

repeated pattern rather than as a once-for-all event." Barrett, *Acts of the Apostles*, 867. This suggests that the Lukan Paul's declaration in 18:6 may be a bit overly dramatic.

²¹⁴ Commentators agree the saying in 18:6 is formulaic (as we have shown in a preceding footnote). See F. Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles; Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary* (3rd ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 393 and Fitzmyer, *Acts of the Apostles*, 627. However the Lukan Paul's use of this harsh expression of judgment against the Jews, immediately before a verse that contains the account of the conversion of a Jewish synagogue ruler, cannot be anything other than an exaggeration.

²¹⁵ Craig S. Keener, *Acts, an Exegetical Commentary* (4 vols; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 2:744, concurs, "Ultimately, however, neither the Lukan nor the epistolary Paul articulates a permanent rejection of Paul's Jewish people (Rom 11:15, 26), In Acts, Paul has made this declaration before (Acts 13:46) yet has continued going to Jewish assemblies."

the parable of the Shut Door [Luke 13:22-30], Rom 11:25-32, and Acts 28:17-30) in which the theme of the first century rejection of the early Christian movement by many Jews and Gentile inclusion are linked. Our purpose has been to show that such rejection is indeed one cause of Gentile inclusion in the early Christian movement (along with an ambivalence to Gentile inclusion in first century Judaism and the effects of the delay of the *Parousia* itself). Our purpose in looking at the texts dealing with Jewish rejection, as well as those dealing with ambivalence to Gentile inclusion and the delay of the *Parousia* is to “prepare the soil” for our literary analysis of the motifs of growth (as found in the parables of the Mustard Seed [Mark 4:30-34//Luke 13:18-19//Matt 13:31-32//*Gos. Thom.* 20], and the Weeds [Matt 13:24-30, 36-43//*Gos. Thom.* 57]), the wedding feast (as found in the parable Wedding Banquet/Wedding Feast [Matt 22:1-14//Luke 14:15-23//*Gos. Thom.* 64]), and the absent master (as found in the parable of the Talents/Minas [Matt 25:14-30//Luke 19:11-27]). Now we turn our attention to these three literary motifs with the objective of showing how the delay of the *Parousia* as impetus for Gentile inclusion is developed within.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE PLACE OF THE DELAY OF THE *PAROUSIA* AMONGST THE MOTIVATIONS LEADING TO GENTILE INCLUSION IN THE EARLY CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

In the previous chapters we have laid the foundation for our argument about the phenomenon of Gentile inclusion in the early Christian community. As we dig into the parables which are the focus of our study in Chapters Five through Seven, we will find three motivations that the early Christian community used to justify Gentile inclusion: (1) the delay of the *Parousia* (Chapter One), (2) the ambivalence toward Gentiles in first century Judaism (Chapter Two), and (3) the experience of the rejection of the early Christian movement by many in first century Judaism, especially the Jewish leadership (Chapter Three). In this chapter, we will attempt to define the relationship of the above motivations with each other and evaluate the influence each of these motivations had on Gentile inclusion in the early Christian movement. We will then argue that the delay of the *Parousia* was *one of the most significant motivations* for the early Christian movement to include Gentiles in its communities, an engagement which other groups within first century Judaism pursued with much less vigor despite sharing many of same basic attitudes towards Gentiles. Afterwards, in Chapters Five through Seven, we will turn our focus to the primary data points in our argument that the early Christian movement viewed the *Parousia's* delay as an opportunity for Gentile inclusion: the three literary motifs of growth, absent master, and wedding feast found in the Synoptic parables and the *Gos. Thom.*

I. Introduction: The Delay of the *Parousia* as a Theological Assertion Motivating Social Change

The argument of this study is that the experience of the delay of the *Parousia* was *one of the primary motivations* for the early Christian communities to include Gentiles. Since the data of our study are literary in nature (i.e., the sayings we analyzed in Chapter One and the parables that we will analyze in Chapters Five, Six, and Seven), it would be worthwhile to find out if the same argument could be made for the connection between the *Parousia's* delay and Gentile inclusion from a *sociological perspective*. After all, a literary trend is only evidence of changing attitudes

and not necessarily evidence of a changing *reality*. Unfortunately, many sociologists would be suspicious of any effort to connect intellectual affirmation with social change. Rodney Stark writes, “Social scientists typically are trained to be suspicious of the ‘theological’ or ‘ideological’ explanations and often suppose that these are epiphenomena easily reduced to the ‘real’ causes, which are material in nature.”¹ While we cannot here mount an epistemological defense of a linkage between rationality and behavior, we can note that such skepticism among social scientists is itself fundamentally a philosophical assumption open to critique. In fact, some social scientists of late antiquity would suggest that it is possible to connect belief with social change.² Before going any further in our discussion of the relationship between the three motivations for Gentile inclusion (delay, ambivalence, and rejection), we need to spend a few moments showing how an affirmation like the delay of the *Parousia* could become a motivation for a new sociological reality, such as the inclusion of Gentiles into a predominantly Jewish early Christian community.

Several sociologists of late antiquity have noted that by the mid-first century, the early Christian movement was achieving some significant success in attracting Gentiles to its communities despite opposition from competing Jewish groups.³ Although the inclusion of the Gentiles was an extremely significant social phenomenon, the actual numbers of Gentile

¹ Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), 79.

² Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, 79, notes, “Ideas often are critical factors in determining not only individual behavior but, indeed, the path of history. To be more specific, for people in the Greco-Roman world, to be a Christian or a pagan was not simply a matter of ‘denominational preference.’ Rather, the *contents* of Christian and pagan beliefs were different in ways that greatly determined not only their explanatory capacities but also their relative capacities to mobilize human resources.”

³ Gerd Theissen, *Social Reality and the Early Christians* (trans. Margaret Kohl; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 210, notes, “In the fifties of the first century, it could surely no longer have been a matter of doubt that the mission to the Gentiles was not merely more successful than the ministry to the Jews, but that it was up against the actual resistance of Jewish diaspora congregations.”

converts may not have been very large in the first decades of early Christian movement.⁴ Based on a forty-percent rate of growth per decade, Rodney Stark hypothesizes that at the end of the first century, Christians numbered only about 8,000.⁵ Though this number may be small, the point is that in the first century the early Christian movement was itself small; therefore, the numbers of Gentiles affiliating with the movement would have been necessarily small as well according to Stark's hypothesis. An important piece of evidence that the early Christians were indeed few in number is the fact that they met in private homes.⁶ However, it is not the numbers of Gentiles in the early Christian community that is most important for our study. What is important is the change in orientation in the early Christian community toward including Gentiles.⁷ The early Christian movement conscientiously ceased to define itself ethnically (in contrast to other parts of first century Judaism) and embraced seekers from among the Gentiles.⁸ This is a paradigm-shift.

⁴ There were many different groups represented in the early Christian movement, meaning that Gentile converts could only have made up a fraction. Fredrick Bird, "Early Christianity as an Unorganized Ecumenical Religious Movement," in *HEC* (ed. Anthony Blasi, *et al.*; Lanham, Mass.: Altimira Press, 2002), 237, notes, "Some of the converts to the early Christian movement were Jewish, some of them diaspora Jews, less strongly influenced by Judaeon views of Judaism. Some converts were God-fearing, non-ethnic individuals whose commitment to and interest in Judaism was based on personal or family choice. To be sure, the early Christian movement also attracted many gentile converts."

⁵ Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, 7.

⁶ Ekkehard W. Stegemann and Wolfgang Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement* (trans. O. C. Dean, Jr.; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 276; trans of *Urchristliche Sozialgeschichte: Die Anfang im Judentum und die Christugemeinden in der Mediterranen Welt* (Stuttgart: Verlag W. Kohlhammer, 1995), note, "The possibilities that a private home offered as a place of assembly suggest that the number of members of Christ-confessing communities corresponded to spatial capacities."

⁷ A change in orientation toward Gentiles does not mean that the church very quickly became overwhelmingly Gentile in character. We may assume that Jewish-Christians remained influential long into the second-century. Based on the fact that conversions generally come from those in the family and relational circles of adherents, Stark argues that Jews made up a much higher percentage of the early Christian community even into the third and fourth-centuries. See Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, 57.

⁸ Theissen, *Social Reality*, 219, writes, "In spite of all the parallels [between first century Judaism and early Christianity], there was one important distinction between Jews and Christians. Jews were an *ethnos*. Their way of life was based on an age-old tradition. Christians, in contrast, were interethnic. They were proud of embracing different nations and peoples."

With this qualification in place, we can suggest a model for how the affirmation of the *Parousia*'s delay reinforced a change in the social make-up of the early Christian community. As we have noted on several occasions in this study, our model is based on John Gager's discussion of the effect of the delay of the *Parousia*. According to Gager, one of the primary motivations for Gentile inclusion in the early Christian movement is the experience of *cognitive dissonance* at the non-occurrence of the eschatological crisis predicted by Jesus.⁹ Gager's discussion of cognitive dissonance with regard to religious beliefs has been developed on the foundation of several studies by L. Festinger.¹⁰ Cognitive dissonance is the discomfort created when one's hopes, beliefs, and ideals seem to be disproved by reality. In Chapter One we showed that the early Christian movement *hoped* for an imminent eschatological vindication which, in the period after Easter, came to be identified with the *Parousia*. When the *Parousia* did not occur in the time-frame hoped for, i.e., during the generation of Jesus' first disciples, early Christians faced disappointment as we noted in texts like 2 Pet 3, 1 Thess 4-5, and *1 Clem* 23. Gager defines that disappointment this way,

Under certain conditions a religious community whose fundamental beliefs are disconfirmed by events in the world will not necessarily collapse and disband. Instead it may undertake zealous missionary activity as a response to its sense of cognitive dissonance, i.e., a condition of distress and doubt stemming from the disconfirmation of an important belief . . . Rationalization, i.e., revisions of the original belief or of views about the disconfirming event, will also operate, but proselytism almost always occurs. The assumption, often unconscious, is that 'if more and more people can be persuaded that the system of belief is correct, then clearly it must, after all, be correct.'¹¹

Gager goes on to claim that the outer limit at which a religious movement cannot endure the disconfirmation of a fundamental tenet depends on "the extent to which individual members

⁹ Gager, *Kingdom and Community*, 37-49.

¹⁰ L. Festinger, *et. al.*, *When Prophecy Failed* (New York: Harper and Row, 1956) and L. Festinger, *A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957).

¹¹ Gager, *Kingdom and Community*, 39.

have transferred former loyalties and identities (family, friends, religion, profession) to the new group; and the extent to which the group itself succeeds in retaining and sustaining these new loyalties.”¹² Since the early Christian community excelled at creating and sustaining a new identity among its members, it was able to endure the delay of the *Parousia* by channeling feelings of dissatisfaction into proselytism or Gentile inclusion.

Gager’s analysis has a number of weaknesses. First, he confirms his argument with evidence collected from modern religious movements which provided a specific date for the end of the world.¹³ The early Christian movement never provided a *specific date* for the eschatological consummation and therefore never faced the level of *cognitive dissonance* which such a disconfirmation would create.¹⁴ Second, Gager doesn’t acknowledge that the early Christian movement stood in a Jewish tradition which had for many centuries dealt with the delay of prophecy (e.g., Habakkuk 2:3).¹⁵ Thus, a religious framework already existed for the early Christian movement to address the delay of the *Parousia*, reducing the level of dissonance.¹⁶ Third, Gager does not take into account that while the early Christian movement did *hope* for an imminent eschatological vindication, it viewed the date of the *Parousia* as completely

¹² Gager, *Kingdom and Community*, 46.

¹³ Gager, *Kingdom and Community*, 46-47.

¹⁴ Despite the fact that there was no specific date, the non-occurrence of the *Parousia* did cause significant discomfort to many in the early Christian movement. Vicky Balabanski writes, “One cannot assume that the lack of a specific date for the parousia in the New Testament passages in question necessarily means that the effect of the non-occurrence of the parousia was negligible.” Balabanski, *Eschatology*, 14.

¹⁵ See 2 Bar. 20:6, “And after this time come to this place, and I shall reveal myself to you, and I shall speak to you true things, and I shall command you with regard to the course of times, for they will come and will not tarry.” Translation by A. F. Klijn, “2 (Syriac Apocalypse of) Baruch,” in *OTP*, 1:627. See also Isa 13:22; Bar 48:39; and Heb 10:37.

¹⁶ Balabanski, *Eschatology*, 14, observes, “A *locus classicus* for apocalyptic reflection on the problem of delay was Hab. 2:3, which appeals to the omnipotent sovereignty of God, who has determined the time of the End. From this was drawn the notion that apparent delay belongs to the purpose of God, and thus an appropriate response is both prayer that God should no longer delay and patient waiting while the sovereign God did delay. In this way, ‘the tension was held within a structure of religious response which could contain it.’ The attitude of patience in view of the delay in the judgment of the Lord described in Hab 2:3 could be applied by the early Christian community to the delay of the Day of Lord, or the *Parousia* of Christ.

unpredictable, and possibly *later* than expected. Therefore, in contrast to Gager's analysis, I posit that the early Christian movement's theology could with some difficulty account for a delayed *Parousia*.¹⁷ The majority of the *dissonance* originated from a powerful hope for an imminent eschatological vindication (see Chapter One).

Despite these shortcomings, Gager provides a helpful sociological explanation for the connection between the theological assertion of the *Parousia*'s delay and the sociological phenomenon of Gentile inclusion in the early Christian movement. Gager's concept of *cognitive dissonance* provides a satisfactory accounting for many of the delay-texts studied in Chapter One. Instead of a brief period to be used primarily for convincing fellow Jews of Christ's messiah-ship before the imminent *Parousia* (e.g., Matt 10:5-7, 23), the early Christian movement was forced to grapple with not merely the *possibility* of an extended period of time of unknown duration before Christ's appearance; but also the *reality* of it. What was the *meaning* and *purpose* of this interim period? As Gager suggests in his theory of cognitive dissonance, early Christians sought an explanation for the *Parousia*'s delay by reflecting on the interest shown by Gentiles in their movement.¹⁸ To put it in religious terms, the early Christian movement realized, spurred on no doubt by reflection on Jesus' sayings, OT tradition, and the influence of extraordinary figures like Paul and others, that God had provided this time-period for the incorporation of the Gentiles which later developed into what Gager would recognize as full-fledged "proselytism" or the Gentile mission.

¹⁷ Again, Balabanski provides a helpful perspective, "I accept, together with the exponents of consistent eschatology . . . that the earliest years of the Christian movement were characterized by an imminent expectation of the parousia of Christ . . . However, these communities found that they had certain resources to meet it. This challenge did not take place everywhere at the same time, and, according to the evidence of my studies, it did not produce the sort of crisis which the proponents of consistent eschatology sought." Balabanski, *Eschatology*, 23.

¹⁸ Gager writes, "Rationalization in connection with important beliefs, specifically the death of Jesus and the delay of the kingdom, represents an effort to reduce doubt and despair and thus is evidence of cognitive dissonance." Gager, *Kingdom and Community*, 45-46.

There is one final note to make about the sociological connection we have made between the affirmation of the *Parousia*'s delay and Gentile inclusion. After the early Christian movement began to include Gentiles, momentum would have developed to embrace them in ever greater numbers based on the theory of *social conformity*. Stark notes that very rarely is ideology the primary cause of religious conversion. Much more often, "it is about bringing one's religious behavior into alignment with that of one's friends and family members."¹⁹ Therefore, if a Gentile husband, father, wife, or mother became a Christian, the rest of the family would be much more likely to follow (e.g., Acts 16:31-34). Stark argues the phenomenon of conformity became an ever greater driving force in the spread of Christianity.²⁰ Thus, if other theological and sociological motivations were enough to persuade a handful of Gentiles to join early Christianity, then a kind of social momentum could develop. Stark's theory of *social conformity* in conversion along with Gager's argument about cognitive dissonance provide reasonable sociological explanations for the connection between the delay of the *Parousia* and Gentile inclusion in the early Christian community.

As the decades passed in the first century, the early Christian movement was forced to find significance in the ever-lengthening period of time before the *Parousia*. Eventually, the idea grew that the delay was a divinely-ordained period to preach the Christian message to the Gentiles and include them among the remnant of Israel who confessed Jesus as the Christ.²¹ Cullman has clearly articulated this concept:

The concept that the gospel preaching is an integral part of the divine plan of salvation, and is a part that makes clear that the redemptive line continues on in the present time, assumes in Primitive Christianity the precise form that we shall

¹⁹ Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, 17.

²⁰ Stark, *The Rise of Christianity*, 17-20.

²¹ Gager, *Kingdom and Community*, 46.

here follow through the entire New Testament: the end will come only when the gospel shall have been preached to all peoples . . . The thing that here concerns us is the fact that the gospel is *preached* to all. Thus during the period of the Church the preaching of the gospel itself becomes the sign of the end [emphasis his].²²

The delay, though distressing, was rich in meaning for the early Christian movement. In Chapters Five, Six, and Seven, we will show through the parables that the delay was one important motivation in turning a first century Jewish sub-group which had no more interest in Gentiles than the rest of first century Judaism²³ into an outward-focused religion (increasingly distinct from Judaism) that embraced a class of people (i.e., the Gentiles) which its members had formerly separated themselves from. However, it is not only the theme of *delay* that will appear in the parables we will study. The themes of ambivalence to Gentiles and the experience of rejection will often be incorporated in the parables alongside the delay. For this reason, before we go any further into our parables, we have to reflect on the relationship of delay, ambivalence, and the experience of rejection. Chapter Four will argue that the delay of the *Parousia* helped to resolve the tension inherent within the feelings of ambivalence to Gentiles and the discomfort experienced by the early Christian community because of the rejection of many in first century Judaism. Essentially, the delay of the *Parousia* allowed the early Christian community to understand ambivalence to Gentiles and Jewish rejection as complementary motivations for Gentile inclusion. The concept of delay as an impetus for Gentile inclusion was so useful that it

²² Cullmann, *Christ in Time*, 158.

²³ While I do not wish to return to this subject since we have already treated in Chapter Three, Shaye Cohen offers an excellent summary of this transition: “Early Christianity ceased to be a Jewish sect when it ceased to observe Jewish practices. It abolished circumcision and became a religious movement overwhelmingly gentile in composition and character. The process was accompanied by the elevation of Jesus to a position far higher and more significant than that occupied by any intermediary figure in Judaism; even those Jews who, like Philo, used their belief in God’s Logos to explain how a transcendent and unknowable God could create the world and interact with it did not worship the Logos or pray to it. Its practices no longer those of the Jews, its theology no longer than of the Jews, its membership no longer Jewish, and its political institutions no longer those of the Jews, the Christianity of the early second century CE was no longer a Jewish phenomenon but a separate religion.” Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, 161.

was integrated into the written record of the early Christian movement through the literary motifs of growth, absent master, and wedding feast found in the Synoptic parable tradition.

II. A Note about the Delay of the *Parousia* as an Explanation and Motivation for Gentile Inclusion

Our discussion in Chapter Four faces a limitation with respect to the issue of causation. In our analysis we effectively face what is popularly called the “chicken-or-the-egg-dilemma.” To put the dilemma in terms of our study, did the experience of consternation at the *Parousia*’s delay come first, *causing* the early Christian movement to see this un hoped-for time period as grounds to include Gentiles in its communities? Or did Gentile interest in the early Christian message happen *before* or *concurrently* with the experience of the *Parousia*’s delay, leading the early Christian movement to conceive of such Gentile interest as a *reason for the delay*. Our inquiry is limited by the fact that it is *literary* in nature, examining explanations and assertions created by the early Christian community *ex post facto*. For this reason, we can speak with no certainty on whether the delay of the *Parousia* initially *caused* the early Christian community to be open to Gentile inclusion. My intuition is that the experience of the delay of the *Parousia* happened concurrently with Gentile inclusion, allowing each of these realities to be drafted into a theological explanation for the other.²⁴

There is, however, one assertion that we can make with a higher level of certainty. As the delay of the *Parousia* came to be cited more and more as a basis for Gentile inclusion by notable personalities in early Christian literature analyzed in this study, it became increasingly influential as a *motivation* and *justification* for further including Gentiles in the early Christian movement.

²⁴ Probably the Gospel of Mark or Paul’s Epistle to the Romans are the earliest pieces of Christian literature containing all three of the motivations that we have discussed for Gentile inclusion (the *Parousia*’s delay, the experience of Jewish rejection, and ambivalence to Gentile inclusion). Thus we can with some assurance say that the early Christian movement was considering all three of these motivations in the decade preceding Jerusalem’s destruction.

It is this sense that we will use the terms “motivation” and “explanation” in the foregoing discussion.

III. *Parousia*’s Delay, Gentile Inclusion, and the Problem of Jewish Ambivalence to Gentiles

In Chapter Two we discussed at length Jewish attitudes toward Gentiles and vice versa. We argued that in general, attitudes toward Gentiles were characterized by ambivalence. As the elect people of God, the Jewish nation was set apart from the other nations by YHWH. The theology of election became (at least for some) a barrier towards Gentile inclusion²⁵ with the result that a certain concept of Israel’s election was harshly criticized in the early Christian tradition.²⁶ Gentiles were considered to be ceremonially unclean and, therefore, a source of pollution for elect Israel called to be separate from the nations. On the other hand, there was a strong tradition of openness to Gentiles within the Jewish sacred writings as we explored in Chapter Two (especially Isa 40-55 and 56-66). Into this milieu of ambivalence toward Gentiles, the experience of delay was an attractive explanation for Gentile inclusion in the early Christian community.

While there is no need to return to our discussion of the negative pole of ambivalence (i.e., *contra* inclusion) within first century Judaism, we should say a few words about the concept of Israel’s election as it relates to ambivalence toward Gentiles. There can be no doubt that Israel’s

²⁵ In fact this separation between elect Israel and the Gentile world came to expression even in the design of the Second Temple which had a separation between the courts of Israel and the Gentiles. James Dunn writes, “In the same way, an even more major boundary had also been broken through - that surrounding the court of Israel, which marked Israel off from the Gentile world, the ritual expression of Israel's election and special set-apartness for God. This may be explicit in Ephesians' talk of 'breaking down the barrier formed by the dividing wall' (Eph. 2.14).” Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways*, 109.

²⁶ For example, there are a number of sayings that question the validity of Israel’s election in the light of its refusal to acknowledge Jesus. See the sayings on Nineveh and the Queen of Sheba (Luke 11:29-32//Matt 12:38-42) and the sayings on Sodom, Gomorrah, Tyre, and Sidon (Luke 10:12-15//Matt 10:15; 11:20-24). Bird, “Jesus and the Gentiles after Jeremias,” 98.

election as the unique people of God separate from the nations is a dominant theme in the OT.²⁷ Israel was to be a separate, holy people dedicated to YHWH its God.²⁸ According to Jewish historical writings (especially the *Pentateuch*, Joshua and Judges), through Israel YHWH promised to drive out the Canaanite nations so that his covenant people would not become defiled by their corruption.²⁹ However, according to the perspectives of Joshua and Judges, Israel was not faithful in driving out the Canaanites and soon became ensnared by them as predicted.³⁰ This failure to realize its election to be separate from the nations became a point of great regret for Israel according to Ezra.³¹

On the other hand, in at least in the eyes of some Jewish figures, an exclusivist concept of election was a liability. Jonah, for example, is a story about the ubiquitous nature of God's grace (even for the Ninevites, Israel's Gentile-oppressors) over against a nationalistic and exclusivist interpretation of YHWH's election of Israel.³² The early Christian tradition provides ample

²⁷ See Deut 10:14-15: "To the LORD your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it. Yet the LORD set his affection on your forefathers and loved them, and he chose [בָּחַר] you, their descendants, above all the nations [מִכָּל-הָעַמִּים], as it is today." See also Exod 19:5-6: "Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations [מִכָּל-הָעַמִּים] you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."

²⁸ Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways*, 38.

²⁹ See Lev 18:24: "Do not defile yourselves in any of these ways, because this is how the nations that I am going to drive out before you became defiled."

³⁰ See the report in Judg 1:27-2:5 condemning Israel for failing to drive out the nations and becoming defiled by them.

³¹ See for example, Ezra 9-10, where Ezra castigates the exiles for marrying foreign wives and practicing foreign traditions: "After these things had been done, the leaders came to me and said, 'The people of Israel, including the priests and the Levites, have not kept themselves separate from the neighboring peoples with their detestable practices, like those of the Canaanites, Hittites, Perizzites, Jebusites, Ammonites, Moabites, Egyptians and Amorites. They have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and their sons, and have mingled the holy race with the peoples around them. And the leaders and officials have led the way in this unfaithfulness (9:1-2).'"

³² Walter Vogels writes, "In other words this book [Jonah] teaches, as so many other texts do, that the nations too are responsible before God, who will punish the unfaithful, but will save the one who converts. It would be difficult to call this a real 'missionary' text, though it seems to invite Israel to open up to the world, if only as a reaction against the bad interpretation of her election. Yahweh's pity is really universal." Vogels, *God's Universal Covenant*, 133.

evidence of just such a critique in the sayings and parables of the Synoptic Gospels. According to Michael Bird, “Jesus criticized both a naïve presumption in Israel’s elect status as guaranteeing divine favour and criticized those who construed Israel’s election in nationalistic terms. It is important to note that Jesus did not see the election of Israel as something that had been used up, but rather as a good thing that had become an object of misplaced trust or else misused in support of an ethos of Jewish nationalism.”³³ Some authors have highlighted the Q sayings on Jonah and the Queen of the South (Matt 12:38-42//Luke 11:29-32) as examples of the critique of an exclusivist conception of Israel’s election. These texts portray Israel as stubborn, insisting on the prerogatives of its election in comparison with Gentiles who willingly receive God’s grace. Paul Meyer argues that these sayings “show that the Q-community recognized the Gentile mission as legitimate and as the activity of God, but it was explained as God's response to Israel's impenitence. The fact that Gentiles were repenting was then used in preaching to warn fellow Jews that they were in danger of completely forfeiting their heritage as the people of God.”³⁴ Thus, Israel should not trust in her election as an exclusive guarantee of salvation, but should rather take her cue from the positive response of the Gentile nations who would be included among the “elect” based on their reception of the early Christian message.³⁵

Despite this revision in the concept of Israel’s election to include space for Gentiles, the weight rested more heavily on the negative (i.e., anti-Gentile) side of Jewish ambivalence in the

³³ Bird, *Jesus and the Origin of Gentile Mission*, 130.

³⁴ Meyer, “The Gentile Mission in Q,” 405.

³⁵ Michael Bird writes, “*This theme of not trusting in the inviolable character of Israel’s election emerges throughout the Synoptic tradition* [emphasis mine]. The Q tradition speaks of some being thrown outside while others enjoy the kingdom (Lk. 13:28-29/Mt. 8:10-12). Weeds and wheat would be gathered together, but weeds are separated and burned (Mt. 13:24-30, 36-43). A dragnet would bring in fish of every type and the bad would be thrown out (Mt. 13:47-50). A returning king would reward faithful stewards, but punish severely those citizens who petitioned against him or failed to do his will (Lk. 19:11-27/Mt. 24:14-30). Wicked tenants, who killed the messengers and the son of the absentee landlord, would see the vineyard given to others (Mk 12:1-10; Gospel of Thomas 65).” Bird, *Jesus and the Origin of Gentile Mission*, 130-131.

first century.³⁶ As we mentioned in Chapter Two, the Gentile antagonism and charges of misanthropy and atheism (sometimes culminating in violence against Jews), the restrictiveness of *Torah* with regard to conversion, negative views toward some aspects of Hellenism, the OT concept of the judgment of the nations, and even the idea of centripetal attraction of the YHWH cult (i.e., the Eschatological Pilgrimage of the Nations) were enough to ensure that many Jewish communities of faith remained (for the most part) separate from Gentiles. In addition, Jews themselves saw pagan worship, a daily occurrence in the lives of most Gentiles, as a source of corruption to be avoided.³⁷ In essence, the positive pole in the ambivalent attitude toward the Gentile nations was not strong enough to overcome negative attitudes to Gentiles and allow for inclusion on a large scale.³⁸

We should note that no other first century Jewish group besides the early Christian movement overcame the negative pole of ambivalence to the same extent and sought out Gentiles to be included *in quantity* and *on their own terms*.³⁹ Of course, this does not mean that

³⁶ Jeremias writes, “The attitude of late Judaism towards non-Jews was uncompromisingly severe. In addition to their abhorrence of idolatry, their attitude was largely determined by the oppression which they had undergone at the hands of foreign nations, and by their fear of the increasing prevalence of mixed marriages. Thus it is easy to understand why to them the Gentiles were godless, rejected by God, as worthless in his eyes as chaff and refuse; they were steeped in vice; they were given over to every form of uncleanness, violence, and wickedness. This estimate of the Gentiles was reflected in the popular eschatology. The Messiah of popular expectation would deliver the Jewish people from foreign domination and establish a glorious kingdom.” Jeremias, *Jesus’ Promise*, 40.

³⁷ In *Jub.* 22:16-18 a dying Abraham admonishes Jacob: “Separate yourselves from the Gentiles, and do not eat with them, and do not perform deeds like theirs. And do not become associates of theirs. Because their deeds are defiled, and all of their ways are contaminated, and despicable, and abominable.” O. S. Wintermute, “Jubilees,” in *OTP*, 1:98.

³⁸ Cohen writes, “Many Jews of the Second Temple period, even of the diaspora, would have agreed with the rabbinic disparagement of paganism and the effort to erect social barriers between Jews and gentiles.” Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, 209.

³⁹ It cannot be denied that there is still a great debate as to the extent to which Judaism embraced Gentiles. For example, Feldman, taking Josephus’ apologetic claims about masses of Gentiles allying themselves with Judaism (especially in Josephus’ *Ag. Ap.*) at face value, argues that first century Judaism integrated a large number of Gentile proselytes and sympathizers. See Feldman, *Judaism and Hellenism Reconsidered*, 296-297. However, given Josephus’ desire to defend his fellow Jews in the eyes of the Greco-Roman elite, these reports cannot be accepted uncritically. The same could be said of Philo as well. Lietaert Peerbolte, *Paul the Missionary*, 22-23, provides a convincing counterpoint to Feldman’s assertions about the quantity of Gentiles integrated into Judaism.

Gentiles were absent in the other Jewish groups. As we pointed out in Chapter Two, Gentiles were present in small numbers on their own initiative and only in-so-far as their presence benefited the local Jewish communities (e.g., as patrons).⁴⁰ Nor, do we suggest that Jewish religious practices were not appealing to Gentiles as there is evidence that Jews were expelled from Rome from time to time because of the popularity of Jewish ideas among the Greco-Roman population.⁴¹ Nevertheless, Jewish ambivalence toward Gentiles rested predominantly on the negative pole, thus relegating Gentiles to the margins of first century Judaism.⁴²

And yet, day after day, month after month, year after year, decade after decade, Gentiles became part of Christian community in increasing numbers. As we have shown in Chapter One⁴³ and as we will see in Chapters Five (the motif of growth), Six (the motif of wedding

⁴⁰ Evidence for Gentile presence in first century Judaism comes from Christian writings such as Matthew and Luke-Acts; synagogue inscriptions; Jewish writings like *Jos. Asen.*; Philo and Josephus' works; and some brief references in Greco-Roman literature (e.g., Juvenal's *Satire*).

⁴¹ Expulsions of Jews from Rome in the first century happened in A.D. 19 and during the reign of Emperor Claudius, probably in A.D. 49. See Lietaert Peerbolte's discussion in *Paul the Missionary*, 44-48 and Martin Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem*, 368-370. Tacitus and Suetonius describe an expulsion of the Jews in A.D. 19 because of the influence "Egyptian and Jewish rites" in Rome. Josephus offers another, possibly unrelated, account about the embezzlement of funds destined for the Temple by several Jewish scoundrels which led to a civil disturbance and eventually a Jewish expulsion from Rome (see *Ant.* 18:81-84). Dio Cassius' much later report of the event in A.D. 19 charges, "As the Jews flocked to Rome in great numbers and were converting many of the natives to their ways." See Dio Cassius, *Historiae Romanae*, 62.18.5. According to Lietaert Peerbolte, *Paul the Missionary*, 47, it is possible that this report has been influenced by the effect of the Christian mission since Dio Cassius writes several hundred years after the event and a century after Tacitus and Suetonius. Secondly, there is the expulsion of the Roman Jews mentioned in the NT which probably affected Paul's coworkers, Prisca and Aquila (Acts 18:2). In Suetonius' account, there arose a disturbance in the Roman Jewish community because of a certain *Chrestus* for which Rome's Jews were expelled. *Chrestus* could be a misspelling of *Christos*, and therefore refer to conflict between Jewish-Christians and Jews themselves over the identity of the Christ (Lietaert Peerbolte, *Paul the Missionary*, 48). According to Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem*, 370, the spelling *Chrestus* is to be considered correct and the reasons for the conflict with its resulting expulsion are unknown. Regarding the evidence of these two first century expulsions, Lietaert Peerbolte, *Paul the Missionary*, 48, summarizes: "The expulsions of Jews from Rome cannot be pursued as an argument in favour of the existence of Jewish proselytizing, since they were *ad hoc* events, prompted by different situations. Although they are evidence of the prominent position taken by the Jews in Rome in the period under discussion, they do not indicate a 'missionary zeal' by these Jewish residents of Rome."

⁴² Another way to refer to the influence of the "negative pole" of ambivalence to Gentiles is to speak of the absence of "Gentile mission" in first century Judaism. Rainer Riesner writes, "Scholarship is fairly united now in arguing that Judaism at the time of Jesus and the earliest Jewish churches was no a missionary religion in any sense like the activity of Paul and early Gentile Christianity." Riesner, "A Pre-Christian Jewish Mission," 218. See also McKnight, *A Light among the Gentiles*, 116-117.

⁴³ See pages 41-57 of Chapter One.

feast/banquet), and Seven (the motif of the absent master), the delay of the *Parousia* began to provide a counterpoint to the negative pole of Jewish ambivalence toward Gentiles. The literature of the early Christian movement discloses that early Christians considered the delay as evidence God had included Gentiles among his elect people.⁴⁴ In his unsearchable grace (see discussion on Rom 11:33-36 in Chapter Two and Eight), God had allowed the early Christian movement time to include Gentiles in its preaching and in its communities despite historical separation from them and ambivalence toward them.

IV. The Delay of the *Parousia*, Gentile Inclusion, and the Problem of the Jewish Rejection of the Early Christian Message

The other profoundly influential social and theological motivation with regard to Gentile inclusion was the early Christian movement's experience of rejection by many in first century Judaism, especially the Jewish leadership. In Chapter Three we cited much evidence showing the effect of this rejection on the early Christian movement according to the NT and other early Christian documents.⁴⁵ There is no doubt that such rejection became a motivation for Gentile inclusion⁴⁶ as Paul so passionately explains in Rom 9-11.⁴⁷ However, it is possible that another

⁴⁴ The fact that the early Christian movement saw Gentiles as part of elect Israel accounts for its blend of Jewish and Gentile characteristics. Even Paul, called to "preach the Gospel to the Gentiles from birth" according to Galatians 1:15, remained unapologetically Jewish in his self-understanding despite surrounding himself with Gentiles. Lietaert Peerbolte, *Paul the Missionary*, 150, states, "For Paul's view of his own position this concept of the church as the chosen remnant of Israel into which the Gentiles are welcomed, is of great importance. The existence of the church did not imply a sharp break with Israel—instead, the church should be seen as Israel's final remnant. This view of the church implies a direct continuity before and after the coming of Christ."

⁴⁵ For example, the Parable of the Tenants (Mark 12:1-12/Matt 21:33-46/Luke 20:9-19//*Gos. Thom.* 65); the Temple episode (Matt 21:12-16/Mark 11:15-18/Luke 19:45-47//John 2:13-25); the "East/West" Saying (Matt 8:11-12/Luke 13:28-29); the Parable of the Shut Door (Luke 13:22-30); Rom 11:25-32; and Acts 28:17-30; etc.

⁴⁶ Jeffery Siker, "From Gentile Inclusion to Jewish Exclusion: Abraham in Early Christian Controversy with Judaism," *BTB* 19.1 (1989), 30, writes, "In describing the development of first century Christianity it is common to speak of a shift from Jewish Christianity to Gentile Christianity. The very first generation of Christians were almost exclusively Jewish Christians who for the most part still identified with the synagogue and saw themselves as within the fold of Judaism, broadly defined. Due to the success of the Christian mission among the Gentiles and to the reticence of many Jews to believe in Jesus as the Christ, however, the composition of the early Christian became increasingly Gentile in makeup."

motivation, such as the *Parousia*'s delay, might have played a significant role in Gentile inclusion along with the early Christian movement's experience of rejection.

If rejection by many in first century Judaism was a primary motivation for Gentile inclusion, then it could be reasonably expected that other marginalized groups of first century Judaism (of which there were many) might include Gentiles amongst their adherents. One of the fundamental characteristics of first century Judaism was diversity.⁴⁸ The question, "What is a Jew?" could not be easily answered.⁴⁹ In fact, the term "Jew," signifying adherents to the ancestral religion of Israel, had only begun to be used in the last century B.C.⁵⁰ Also many of these diverse movements (such as Josephus' Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and Zealots) were in bitter competition and openly hostile to each other while competing for ascendancy in first century Judaism. James Dunn well describes this dynamic:

When we do so [examine the first century Jewish documents], at once a remarkable feature becomes apparent. For wherever we have such documents from within the Judaism(s) of the second half of the Second Temple or post-Maccabean period in the land of Israel we find a common theme regularly occurring—firm and unyielding claims to be the only legitimate heirs of Israel's inheritance, and sharp, hostile, often vituperative criticism of other Jews/Judaisms

⁴⁷ Munck argues: "It is in Rom. ix-xi that Paul introduces the Gentiles as an important element in the history of salvation. Here we do not find the attitude that they will achieve salvation only when the Jews are converted. Instead they have an independent place ahead of the Jews, as a preparatory factor in the conversion of the latter. To begin with, the Jews have twice said NO to salvation, first to Christ, and then to the apostles who have preached of the crucified Messiah. But this unbelief and hardness of heart in the chosen people does not constitute a check or end to the history of salvation. The Jews' rejection of the Gospel is the cause of its being offered to the Gentiles. God removes the natural branches from the good olive tree, and grafts in wild branches. Nor is this state final. The very acceptance by the Gentiles of what was really intended for Israel rouses the zeal or jealousy of the Jews. It is Paul's hope that his work among the Gentiles, and their following of the Gospel may rouse this zeal, so that he may save some of them." Munck, "Israel and the Gentiles in the New Testament," 34.

⁴⁸ Dunn, *Christianity in the Making*, 2.265.

⁴⁹ Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem*, 159.

⁵⁰ Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 165, writes, "The second definition was cultural (or 'religious'): the Judeans form a religious community and could extend membership to non-natives who believe in the God of the Judeans and observe his precepts. A non-Judean could become an *Ioudaios* by joining the Judeans in venerating the one true God, the God whose temple was in Jerusalem. Second Maccabees 6:6 and 9:17, the first witness to this new conception and new terminology, mark an important turning point in the history of the word *Ioudaios* and, indeed, in the history of Judaism."

. . . The period was evidently marked by a degree of *intra-Jewish factionalism* [emphasis his] remarkable for its sustained nature and quality of bitterness.⁵¹

Rejection of one Jewish group by another (or others) was a hallmark of first century Judaism.

However, none of these other forms of competing Judaism ever came to embrace Gentiles like the early Christian movement. In fact, some strains of Judaism which eventually lost favor, such as those involved in the Jewish War and the Bar Kokhba Revolt⁵² were themselves overtly hostile to Gentiles to the point of violence.⁵³ Other strains of Judaism such as those inhabiting the Dead Sea environs (e.g., the Essenes and Qumran community) isolated themselves from even their fellow Jews, not to mention Gentiles with whom they scrupulously avoided all contact.⁵⁴ This fact alone should caution us from claiming that the rejection of many in first century Judaism was a decisive motivation that moved the early Christian movement towards Gentile inclusion. Even within later second-century law-observant Ebionite and Nazarene forms of Jewish Christianity, rejection by Rabbinical Judaism did not lead to interactions with Gentiles even as these groups slowly withered in the shadow of catholic Christianity in centuries leading up to Constantine.⁵⁵ Despite the vigorous rejection of more dominant forms of Judaism, we know of no other Jewish group outside of the early Christian movement which allowed the positive pole of Jewish ambivalence to Gentile inclusion to influence its thinking to the point that it embraced non-Jews in significant numbers and on increasingly favorable terms. If the rejection

⁵¹ Dunn, *Christianity in the Making*, 2.281.

⁵² Later Rabbinic literature came to refer to Bar Kokhba as Bar-Koziba (“son of the lie”). Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem*, 468.

⁵³ Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem*, 16, 406.

⁵⁴ Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem*, 229-231.

⁵⁵ Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity*, 108-109.

of many in first century Judaism in and of itself was not an adequate motivation for Gentile inclusion, then what was? It could be, when confronted by both the experience of rejection and the reality of the *Parousia's* delay, early Jewish Christians realized that the ever-lengthening period of time between Easter and the *Parousia* was intended for the inclusion of Gentiles.

With the help of Gager's concept of *cognitive dissonance* we have developed a plausible sociological model for how the early Christian community could have come to understand the delay of the *Parousia* as a motivation and explanation for Gentile inclusion. Furthermore, in the preceeding sections, we have seen the limits of the contrubutions of both Jewish ambivalence to Gentiles and the early Christian community's experience of Jewish rejection as explanations for Gentile inclusion. In the final portion of this chapter we will try to arrive at an understanding of the place of the *Parousia's* delay among these different explanations for Gentile inclusion.

Figure 1: Continuum of Ambivalence to Gentile Inclusion in the Early (Jewish) Christian Movement

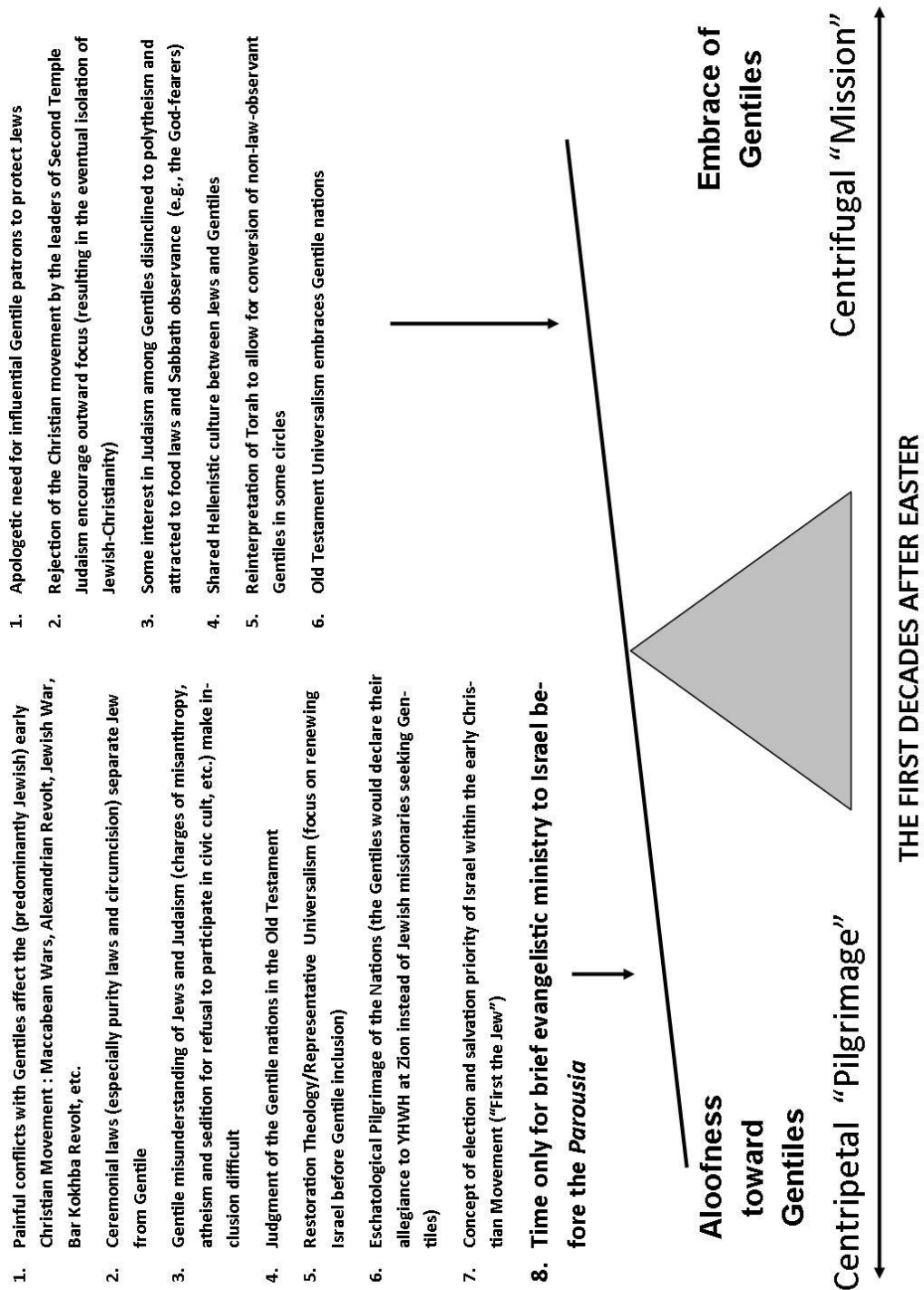
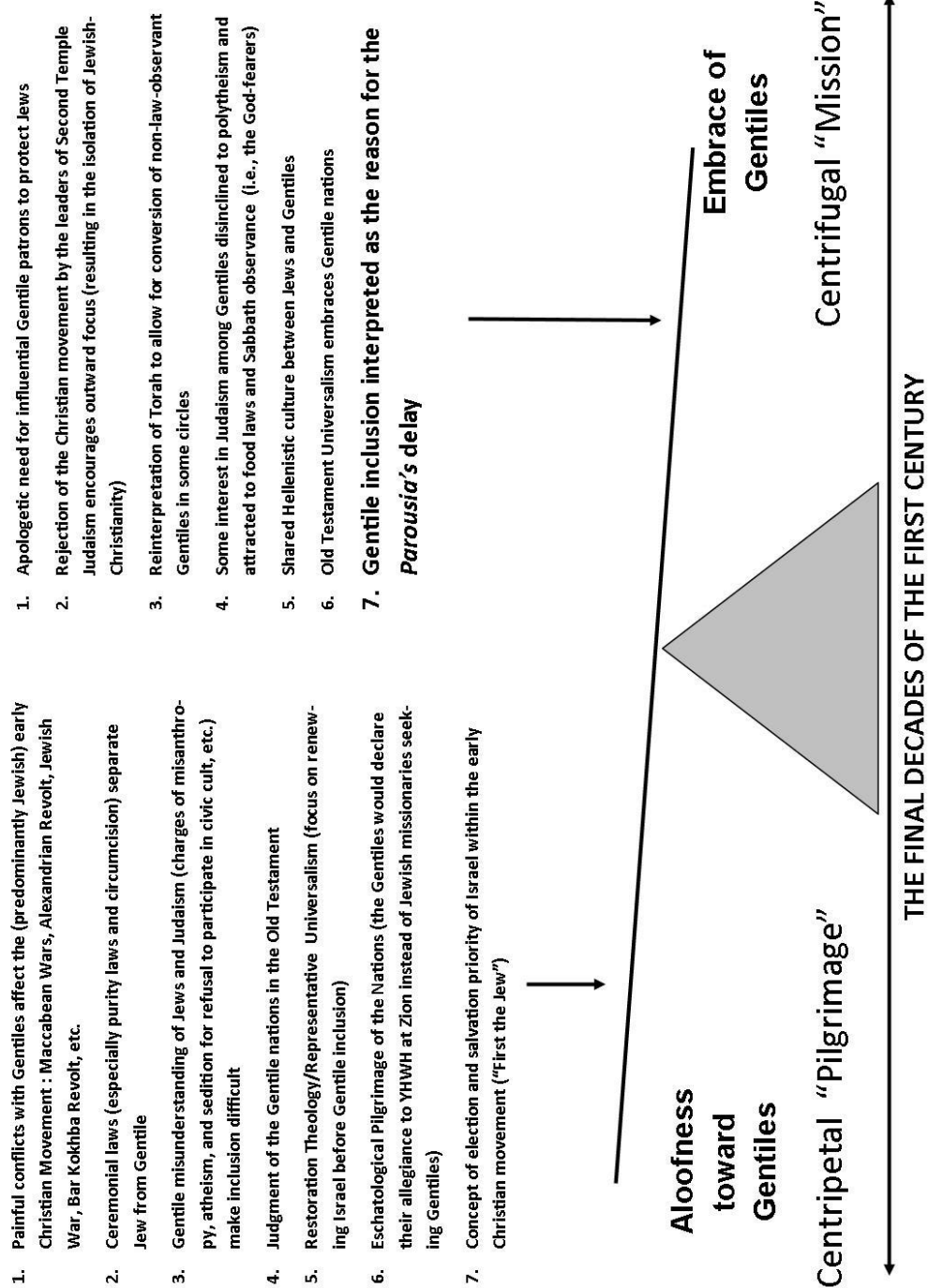


Figure 2: Continuum of Ambivalence to Gentile Inclusion in the Early (Jewish) Christian Movement



V. A Summary of Motivations for and against Gentile Inclusion in the Early Christian Movement

The argument of this study is that the delay of the *Parousia* was a significant motivation for the inclusion of the Gentiles into the early Christian community (as shown in three literary motifs to be developed in Chapters Five, Six, and Seven).⁵⁶ Figure one and two above are visualizations of contributing motivations both for and against Gentile inclusion in the early Christian movement. A brief analysis of these diagrams will suffice to demonstrate the importance of the *Parousia*'s delay.

Figures one and two display continuums of ambivalence to Gentile inclusion in the early Jewish-Christian movement. Figure one represents the first decades after Easter. Figure two represents the final decades of the first century. The left side of the continuums represents the prevalent OT concept of Gentile inclusion which I have discussed in Chapter Two,⁵⁷ the Eschatological Pilgrimage or “centripetal” attraction. In this concept, the Gentiles will come to Jerusalem (the “center” of the YHWH cult) to pledge allegiance to YHWH at the end of time based on YHWH’s mighty acts.⁵⁸ The right side of the continuums represents the “centrifugal” concept of mission where Israel seeks out the Gentiles to share with them the knowledge of YHWH encapsulated by declarations like Matt 28:16-20.⁵⁹ On the left, the relationship to Gentiles is “aloof” and “distant” since Israel has no role to play in inclusion (and indeed can

⁵⁶ It is not our intention to rule out other important motivations for Gentile inclusion that are not part of our analysis. One motivation which merits further analysis is the reinterpretation of Torah to allow for Gentile inclusion outside of ceremonial and purity laws. However, this motivation is relatively early (e.g., Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians), whereas the delay of the *Parousia* did not become a critical issue until near the end of the lives of Jesus’ disciples. For this reason I have included this motivation in both the figures representing the first decades after Easter (figure one) and the final decades of the first century (figure two).

⁵⁷ See pages 84-85 and 100-107 of Chapter Two.

⁵⁸ Wilson, *The Gentiles*, 2-3.

⁵⁹ Vogels, *God’s Universal Covenant*, 115.

jeopardize its election by syncretism with Gentiles). On the right side of the continuum, the relationship to Gentiles is that of active embrace and inclusion. On each end of the scale are the motivations contributing to the aloofness towards (on the left) or the active inclusion of (on the right) of Gentiles. Ultimately, it is the combined weight of all the factors that motivated the early Christian movement's decision to embrace or to remain distant to the Gentiles.⁶⁰

A. The Motivations against Gentile Inclusion in the Early Jewish-Christian Movement

A brief look at the two figures shows that the motivations against Gentile inclusion in the early Jewish-Christian movement are more than those for it, both in the decades after Easter and the final decades of the first century.⁶¹ The violence of the Jewish rebellions in Palestine (A.D. 66-72/3 and A.D. 132-136) and the Diaspora (e.g., Alexandrian unrest in A.D. 38 and the much larger Jewish rebellion in A.D. 115 throughout the eastern Mediterranean provinces), the cultural and religious distance between Jew and Gentile, the resulting “anti-Judaistic”⁶² tendencies of Greco-Roman society (leading to charges of atheism, misanthropy, sedition against the state for refusal to patronize the civic cults), and the OT bias against active Gentile inclusion (in, for

⁶⁰ There is evidence that some parts of the early Christian community perhaps never did include Gentiles in significant numbers. Good examples are the Ebionites and Nazarenes, two Jewish-Christian groups which resided in Palestine and its environs, produced Christian documents, and are known only through occasional references by Josephus, Eusebius, Epiphanius, and other ancient historians. See Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity*; Van Elderen, “Early Christianity in the Transjordan,” 97-117; and Dunn, *Christianity*, 2.132-135. Another perspective on the existence of Christian communities which did not receive Gentile adherents in large numbers can be found from the standpoint of heresiology in studies like Walter Bauer, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971); trans. of *Rechtgläubigkeit und Ketzerei im ältesten Christentum* (2nd ed.; Tübingen: Mohr, 1964) and Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines, the Partition of Judeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

⁶¹ Paula Fredriksen argues that the overwhelming evidence from the first century (both from Gentile and Jewish sources) is that there was no pro-active effort to include Gentiles in Judaism. She writes, “If the external evidence for Jewish missions is unobliging [*sic*], the internal evidence is no less so.” Paula Fredriksen, “Judaism, the Circumcision of Gentiles, and Apocalyptic Hope: Another Look at Galatians 1 and 2,” *JTS* 42 (1991), 539. However, Gentiles were included within Judaism as “God-fearers” at their own initiative. Fredriksen, “Judaism and the Circumcision,” 540-543.

⁶² It is anachronistic to use the adjective “anti-Semitic” in our reflections on the first century since this term refers to a modern form of racial animosity towards Jews.

example, the concept of the Eschatological Pilgrimage, the judgment of nations, the election and salvation priority of Israel, etc.) make it clear why Jews (Christian or otherwise) had reason to be disinterested in Gentiles.⁶³ Thus Cohen summarizes the state of Jewish-Gentile relations in the first century:

In order to maintain their distinctiveness and identity, most Jews of the ancient world sought to separate themselves from their gentile neighbors. In the cities of the East, they formed their own autonomous ethnic communities . . . Following the lead of Ezra, the Jews of the Second Temple period grew more and more intolerant of marriages with foreigners. Even Philo admired the zeal of Phinehas, who killed an Israelite chieftain for consorting publicly with a Midianite woman.⁶⁴

Certainly, the rancor between Jews and Gentiles was at a historic low in the decades immediately after Easter (before the Jewish War). In contrast, conflict between Jew and Gentile reached a high point in the final decades of the first century as Jerusalem lay in ruins, Jews were banned from her precincts, and Rome had imposed a hated poll-tax on Jews in place of the Jerusalem temple-tax for the purpose of rebuilding a temple of Jupiter Capitolinus in Rome which burned months before Jerusalem's sacking.⁶⁵

⁶³ See Cadoux, *The Historical Mission of Jesus Christ*, 137, "A great mass of available information shows that the dominant attitude of Palestinian Jews to the non-Jewish world was one of fear, aloofness, disapproval, and hatred. It was not altogether unnatural that this should be so. Their national history had acquainted them at first hand with the cruelty and vice of the Gentile powers. Their own holy land, which had been traditionally regarded as Yahweh's special preserve, was dotted over, to its defilement, by Gentile settlements. Their political independence had been taken away. Their peculiar habits and beliefs evoked the contempt of non-Jews generally; and the more passionately they clung to their national faith and their national religious observances, the more they disliked the uncircumcised heathen who ignored or flouted them."

⁶⁴ Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, 38.

⁶⁵ Goodman, *Rome and Jerusalem*, 433, 452. Later in the second-century, after (or as a response to) the disastrous Jewish revolt of A.D. 132-136, Emperor Hadrian outlawed circumcision for all people (including native-born Jews). The edict was rescinded later for all but native-born Jews, effectively outlawing proselytism. By the end of the second century, conversion to Judaism was outlawed completely. See Cohen, *Maccabees to Mishnah*, 49. Effectively, by the mid-second century Gentile conversion to law-observant Jewish-Christianity would have been nearly impossible.

According to the above analysis, the motivations discouraging Gentile inclusion in the (Jewish) early Christian movement remained relatively significant and stable throughout the first century, though we can point to an increasing tension between Jew and Gentile in the Greco-Roman world toward the end of first century during the Jewish War and its aftermath. However, from the Easter to the end of the first century, the early Christian literature tells a different story of relations between Jew and Gentile. During this period there was an increased interest in including Gentiles as witnessed by the early Christian movement's literature.⁶⁶ Furthermore, there was also a corresponding increase in the number of Gentiles in many early Jewish-Christian communities.⁶⁷ By the mid-second-century, apologetic authors such as Justin Martyr evidence the existence of Christian communities made up predominantly of Gentiles who were in conflict with Judaism.⁶⁸ *What accounts for this shift in the outlook of the early Christian movement from the decades following Easter to the final decades of the first century?*

B. Motivations for Gentile Inclusion in the early Jewish-Christian Movement

As figures one and two show, there is a great deal of continuity between the motivations promoting Gentile inclusion in the early Christian movement in the decades after Easter and in the final decades of the first century. For example, Jews continued to mount an apologetic for their religion and sought out influential Gentiles to intercede on their behalf throughout the first

⁶⁶ We will describe this evidence in Chapters Five, Six, and Seven.

⁶⁷ See Goodman, *The Roman World 44 BC to AD 180*, 322, writes, "The extant Christian literary tradition suggests that Christianity was essentially an urban phenomenon, but Pliny (*Letters* 10.96) in the early second century referred to the large number of Christians in the countryside in Pontus, on the southern shore of the Black Sea, and second-century Christian papyri from Egypt testify to a flourishing Christian presence there about which nothing else is known. Converts were mostly gentiles rather than Jews, and from all levels of society: prosopography of known Christians reveals a preponderance of urban craftsmen and not a few richer members of the local aristocracies."

⁶⁸ Siker, "From Gentile Inclusion to Jewish Exclusion," 30, notes, "Simply stated, whereas earliest Christianity initially emphasized Gentile inclusion within God's promises (Paul, Luke-Acts), a few generations later we find Christians emphasizing God's exclusion of the Jews apart from Jesus the Christ (John, Justin Martyr)." See also Stegemann and Stegemann, *The Jesus Movement*, 353.

century.⁶⁹ There continued to be friction between the Jewish-Christian movement and the other dominant groups of Judaism throughout the first century⁷⁰ which motivated early Christians to include those outside their ethnic group (see Chapter Three). From the early days of the Christian movement until the close of the first century, there was an interest in Judaism among Gentiles of a more philosophical bent⁷¹ which could have been exploited by Jewish-Christians to recruit influential supporters.⁷² Of course, Gentile interest in anything related to Judaism would have declined temporarily toward the end of the first century as enmity increased between Rome and Judaism in light of the rebellions and civil strife between Jews and Greco-Roman populations throughout the Empire.

Another weighty motivation for Gentile inclusion both in first century Judaism and in early Christianity is the shared heritage of Hellenism between Jews of all stripes and their Gentile neighbors as we discussed in Chapter Two. Of course, early Christianity proved to be much more effective at attracting Hellenized Gentiles in the second and third centuries; but, as we saw in Chapter Two, this was an inherited characteristic from first century Judaism.⁷³ The influence of Hellenism remained fairly stable both in the first decades after Easter and in the final decades of the first century as figures one and two show.⁷⁴ Cohen argues that “All the varieties of Judaism

⁶⁹ For example, Josephus’ apologetic for the Judaism, *Against Apion*, was written in the late first or early second century. Earlier in the first century, Philo of Alexandria also wrote a number of apologetics and even traveled to Rome in A.D. 40 in defense fellow Alexandrian Jews.

⁷⁰ Justin Martyr, a second-century Christian apologist makes reference to “cursing in your [the Jews’] synagogues those that believe on Christ” which is a reference to the “Twelfth Benediction” or the *Birkat Ha-Minim*, recited in Jewish synagogues during the early church period. The Twelfth Benediction is actually a curse directed against heretics like Christians. See Justin Martyr, *Dial.*, 16, and Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways*, 289.

⁷¹ Lietaert Peerbolte, *Paul the Missionary*, 36-37.

⁷² See discussion of the “God-Fearers” on page 68-73 of Chapter Two.

⁷³ See Chapter Two, pages 65-73.

⁷⁴ Martin Hengel, *The ‘Hellenization’ of Judea in the First Century after Christ* (Translated by John Bowden; London: SCM Press, 1989), 30-44; trans. of *‘Hellenisierung’ Judäas im 1. Jahrhundert nach Christus* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1989), discusses the ubiquitous influence of Hellenism in Palestinian

in the Hellenistic period [including Christianity], of both diaspora and the land of Israel, were Hellenized, that is, were integral parts of the culture of the ancient world.”⁷⁵ Thus, Gentiles would have had fundamental cultural connections with the early Jewish-Christian communities throughout the first century.

Another very weighty motivation for Gentile inclusion that was present both in the decades following Easter and in the final years of the first century was the advent of the Christian interpretation of *Torah* that allowed segments of the early Christian community to embrace non-law-observant Gentiles.⁷⁶ Stuhlmacher notes,

Never in the New Testament is the legitimacy of the mission to the Gentiles fundamentally called into question. The evangelization of the Gentiles was apparently not controversial as such, but, rather, the question of if and to what extent they must accept the *Ioudaismos* in order to have a share in the blessings of the covenant of Abraham in Christ.⁷⁷

If the legitimacy of Gentile inclusion was never denied in theory, then it was simply *the conditions* of such inclusion that opened or closed the doors of the early Christian community to Gentiles. With the changing of conditions surrounding *Torah*-observance, many early Christian communities integrated Gentiles much more easily. While not the originator of the idea that non-Torah-observing Gentiles could be admitted in the Christian community, the Apostle Paul was its

Judaism. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem*, 5, discusses the powerful attraction of Hellenism for Diaspora Judaism, “It is evident from the literature of the Diaspora that at least some Jews were educated, by whatever means, in Greek literature and philosophy. The open attitude of the Diaspora Jews to their Hellenistic environment is amply shown in their use of Greek names and their recourse to Hellenistic law. The struggle of the Jews in Alexandria for parity with the Greek citizens typifies the aspirations of the Hellenistic Diaspora. The Hellenistic Jews were not reluctant exiles. They were attracted by Hellenistic culture, eager to win the respect of the Greeks and to adapt to their ways.”

⁷⁵ Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, 27-28.

⁷⁶ Lietaert Peerbolte, *Paul the Missionary*, 110, writes, “Though the lenient attitude towards the Mosaic Law and criticism of the temple were not restricted to the Greek-speaking Jewish Christians, this theological position did create a good foundation for this group of Jewish Christians to attract Gentiles.”

⁷⁷ Stuhlmacher, “Matt 28:16-20,” 34.

greatest proponent.⁷⁸ Eventually, and certainly by the last decades of the first century, distance developed between proponents of Torah-observant Christianity and the sections of the early Christian community which contained more and more uncircumcised Gentiles.⁷⁹ While the early Christian willingness to embrace non-*Torah*-observant Gentiles was stronger at the end of the first century, it was certainly very influential in the first decades after Easter due to personalities like the Apostle Paul. Therefore, the willingness to embrace non-*Torah*-observant Gentiles does not account in and of itself for the phenomenon of greatly increased Gentile inclusion between Easter and the final years of the first century.

If, for the sake of argument, the motivations for Gentile inclusion shown in figure one (which are all present in figure two in varying degrees) remained relatively stable from Easter to the final decades of the first century, *then what accounts for an increased openness to Gentile inclusion as witnessed in early Christian documents and the actual presence of more Gentiles within the early Christian movement at the end of the first century?*

VI. The Delay of the *Parousia* as a Key Motivation for the Inclusion of the Gentiles in the Early Christian Movement

There is one motivation (see the bottom of the left column on figure one), present in the early Christian movement during the decades following Easter, but absent in the final years of the first century. That motivation was the hope for a brief interim before the *Parousia* in which the Jews would be successfully evangelized as Matt 10:5-6 reflects.⁸⁰ Despite their convictions about the unpredictability of the end (e.g., 1 Thess 5:1-11; Mark 13:32//Matt 24:36; and the “Watchfulness

⁷⁸ “The law-free mission to the Gentiles, in other words, would have existed before Paul; once its opponent, he later became its champion.” Fredriksen, “*Judaism and Circumcision*,” 552-553.

⁷⁹ Dunn, *The Partings*, 301, argues: “For the Judaism which focused its identity most fully in the Torah, and which found itself unable to separate ethnic identity from religious identity, Paul and the Gentile mission involved an irreparable breach.”

⁸⁰ See pages 8-18 in Chapter One.

Parenesis”⁸¹), in the decades following Easter early Christians hoped that Christ would vindicate them through the *Parousia* during the lives of the first disciples who were engaged in ministry to the Jews.⁸² Hope in a short interim period would have made it difficult for the early Christian movement to show interest in Gentiles. There was enough time for Israel alone. A negative reception from other late first century Jewish movements would have provided further disconfirmation for the hopes of the early Christian movement.

However, as the decades passed, hope in a brief period before the *Parousia* gave way to the realization and eventual acceptance that the interim period would be of indeterminate length (e.g., Matt 24:45-25:13; and 2 Pet 3). This realization, which we refer to as *the delay of the Parousia* (appearing at the bottom of the right column on figure two), was a key motivation present fully *only in the final decades of the first century*.⁸³ The early Christian community was not caught completely unaware that such a delay could be possible since it affirmed the *unexpected* timing of the *Parousia*. Nevertheless, it was certainly a cause for great consternation (e.g., 1 Clem 23:3; 2 Pet 3:3-4) since the tradition transmitting Jesus’ sayings and actions must have given the strong impression that the interim period could be short.⁸⁴ Furthermore, the first century was a time of apocalyptic fervor in the early Christian community (e.g., Mark 13//Matt 24//Luke 21; cf. 2 Thess 2:1-12). In the first decades after Easter, the non-occurrence of the *Parousia* posed no difficulty for the early Christian community. But, by the final decades of the

⁸¹ The Watchfulness Parenthesis can be found in (1) the parable/simile of the Thief (Matt 24:42-44//Luke 12:39-40; 1 Thess 5:2, 4; 2 Pet 3:10; Rev 3:3 and 16:15); (2) the Gospel sayings on Noah (Matt 24:37-39//Luke 17:26-27) and Lot (Luke 17:28-29); and (3) the parable of the Doorkeeper (Mark 13:34-37//Luke 12:35-38); and (4) the parable of the Virgins (Matt 25:1-13).

⁸² See Mark 13:30//Matt 24:34//Luke 21:32; cf. Mark 14:62//Matt 26:64//Luke 22:69; and 1 Thess 4:13-18.

⁸³ The concept of the *Parousia*’s delay existed “embryonically” following Easter in traditions referring to the *unpredictability of the eschatological crisis*. We have already discussed texts like Habakkuk 2:3 as examples of the theme of delay in Jewish literature predating the early Christian movement.

⁸⁴ See, for example, Matt 10:5-6; Mark 13:30//Matt 24:34//Luke 21:32; and Mark 14:62//Matt 26:64//Luke 22:69.

first century, the time when much of the early Christian literature was being composed, the prolonged period after Easter required explanation and justification.

Thus, the early Christian movement was obliged to find meaning and significance in the delay of the *Parousia*. In addition to the dominical sayings discussed in Chapter One, the early Christian movement had the traditions and theologies regarding Gentiles in the Jewish writings (see Chapter Two) and its conflicted relationship with first century Judaism (see Chapter Three) as input in its formulation of the significance of the delay. As a result of its reflection, the early Christian community elaborated the concept of the delay of the *Parousia* as a *reason* and *motivation* for Gentile inclusion.⁸⁵

As we mentioned in the introductory note to this chapter, it is important to understand how this study uses the terms “reason” and “motivation.” There is no way that a literary study such as this can precisely determine *causation* since its data set came into existence only *after* the events it reports occurred. Therefore I am not claiming that the consternation produced by the experience of the *Parousia*’s *delay* preceded and caused the early Christian movement to become more inclusive of Gentiles. By its nature, a literary study cannot make this determination. What I am claiming is that the delay of the *Parousia* came to be understood by the early Christian movement as an important explanation for Gentile inclusion and vice versa. Of course, there were other explanations provided for both the delay (i.e., producing moral preparation and

⁸⁵ Lietaert Peerbolte writes, “The eschatological enthusiasm that held the early Christians in its grasp must be identified as the prime origin of Christian missionary activities. Both in the letters of Paul and in the Book of Acts we find evidence of the spiritual and prophetic utterances that resulted from this eschatological enthusiasm. Within the context of Jewish apocalypticism, in which the final intervention of God in history was thought of as an event with universal impact, it is clear that preaching about Jesus as God’s final envoy by whom man could be saved from the wrath to come, soon found its way across the borders of Judaism. But this theological development had to be triggered by a sociological pre-condition: the existence of a Jewish community in Antioch, open to Gentiles and open to the proclamation of the Jesus movement.” Lietaert Peerbolte, *Paul the Missionary*, 137.

perseverance) and Gentile inclusion (i.e., the ambivalent presentation of Gentiles in the Hebrew Scriptures, Jewish rejection, new interpretation of *Torah*, etc.).

Since we produced much evidence in Jesus' sayings tradition and in the Epistles for delay as impetus for Gentile inclusion (see Chapter One), we want now to turn our attention to three very enlightening literary motifs in the Synoptic parables in which delay and Gentile inclusion are juxtaposed: the motif of growth (as found in the parables of the Mustard Seed [Mark 4:30-34//Luke 13:18-19//Matt 13:31-32//*Gos. Thom.* 20], and the Weeds [Matt 13:24-30, 36-43//*Gos. Thom.* 57]), the wedding feast (as found in the parable Wedding Banquet [Matt 22:1-14//Luke 14:15-23//*Gos. Thom.* 64]), and the absent master (as found in the parable of the Talents/Minas [Matt 25:14-30//Luke 19:11-27]).

CHAPTER FIVE

THE DELAY OF THE *PAROUSIA* AND GENTILE INCLUSION IN THE MOTIF OF GROWTH AS IT APPEARS IN THE PARABLES OF THE WEEDS AND THE MUSTARD SEED

In the preceding chapters, we have substantially examined and critically evaluated three reasons for the inclusion of the Gentiles in the early Christian community.¹ In Chapter Four, we advanced the claim that the experience of consternation due to the delay of the *Parousia* was a key motivation encouraging the overwhelmingly Jewish early Christian movement to open itself to participation of Gentiles in larger numbers. Although the possibility of a prolonged period of time before the *Parousia* was embryonically present in the earliest traditions of Jesus and his successors (such as Paul) who described the eschatological crisis as fundamentally *unpredictable* (i.e., earlier or *later* than expected), the early Christian movement did not have to address the problem of the delay until the latter-half of the first century as the generation of Jesus' disciples passed away. It was at this time that the early Christian movement found significance in the delay of the *Parousia* as a time period set aside by God for the inclusion of the Gentiles. By claiming the delay is an important motivation for Gentile inclusion, we do not exclude other sociological or theological factors which contributed to this outcome (some of which we have noted in the preceding pages). However, if the delay of the *Parousia* was an important motivation for the inclusion of the Gentiles in the early Christian community, then we should expect to find evidence in the early Christian literature. Since we have already summarized the evidence found in Jesus' sayings and NT epistolary material in Chapter One, we turn our attention to the core of our study: the Synoptic parables and the *Gos. Thom.* Chapter Five will summarize the connection between the delay of the *Parousia* and Gentile inclusion in the motif of growth as found in the parables of the Mustard Seed (Mark 4:30-34//Luke 13:18-19//Matt 13:31-32//*Gos. Thom.* 20) and the Weeds (Matt 13:24-30, 36-43//*Gos. Thom.* 57). We will limit our analysis of these

¹ i.e., the delay of the *Parousia* (ch. 1), the ambivalence toward Gentiles in first-century Judaism (ch. 2), and the early Christian community's experience of rejection by the first-century Jewish leadership (ch. 3).

parables to the features and issues which shed light on the delay of the *Parousia* as impetus for Gentile inclusion.

I. Introduction

The motif of growth is, of course, a very prominent image used in the Synoptic Gospels (and *Gos. Thom.*), especially in Mark 4 and Matt 13. Not *all* the images of growth used in the parables have a connection to delay and Gentile inclusion. For example, the parable of the Sower/Soils and its interpretation (Mark 4:1-20//Matt 13:1-23//Luke 8:1-15), the Seed Growing Secretly (Mark 4:26-29), and the parable/simile² of the Leaven (Matt 13:33//Luke 13:20-21) do not address both the delay of the *Parousia* and Gentile inclusion. In contrast, we will argue that the parables of the Weeds and Wheat and Mustard Seed refer to both the delay and to Gentile inclusion.

There is a natural association between delay of the *Parousia* and the process of vegetative growth, which is the prevailing motif in the parables of the Weeds and the Wheat and Mustard Seed. If indeed the early Christian community *hoped* that the consummation of the eschatological Kingdom in the *Parousia* of the Son of Man would happen shortly after Easter,³ the Synoptic/*Thomassine* comparison of the Kingdom of God to the slow and steady process of vegetative growth certainly provided a counterpoint.⁴ In this sense, other signs of the *Parousia* like astronomical (Mark 14:24-26//Matt 24:29-30), geological (Mark 4:8//Matt 24:7//Luke 21:11), or meteorological phenomena (Matt 24:27//Luke 17:24; Rev 16:19), and the images of the unexpected arrival of the house-holder (Mark 13:34-37//Luke 12:35-38; Matt 24:45-51//Luke

² Technically, the parable of Leaven is actually a *simile* since it merely compares two objects instead of developing a narrative as does a true parable.

³ In Chapter One we argued extensively that while the early Christian community contemplated the possibility of delay, it *hoped* that the period of time between Easter and the *Parousia* would be short.

⁴ See J. D. Kingsbury, *The Parables of Jesus in Matthew 13, A Study in Redaction Criticism* (London: SPCK, 1969), 83, who rightly argues that the process of growth itself is an allusion to the delay of the *Parousia*.

12:41-48), thief (Matt 24:42-44//Luke 12:39-40; 1 Thess 5:2, 4; 2 Pet 3:10; Rev 3:3; and 16:15) or bridegroom (Matt 25:1-13), would be more amenable to the hope for an imminent *Parousia*. Unlike these signs and images, vegetative growth suggests the passage of a significant (even a long) period of time between planting and harvest, which is a clear allusion to the *Parousia* of the Son of Man.⁵

In contrast, there is nothing in the image of vegetative growth that necessarily implies Gentile inclusion. Indeed, as we analyze both the parables of the Weeds and the Mustard Seed, we will see references to Gentile inclusion appear in the interpretation (e.g., the parable of the Weeds) or in the narrative (e.g., the Mustard Seed) itself. Nevertheless, these hints of Gentile inclusion were intentionally and obviously included by collectors and redactors of these parables because of their significance to the early Christian communities which were searching for meaning in the delay and the reality of Gentile presence and interest in their message.

As has been our practice throughout, we will not attempt to chart the historical development of the traditions which connect the delay of the *Parousia* with Gentile inclusion in our two parables. Instead in this chapter, we will show the literary development of these themes (both synchronically and diachronically) in the Synoptic Gospels and the *Gos. Thom.* where they appear. Secondly, we will comment on the significance of these themes (as they appear in the Synoptics and *Gos. Thom.*) for the early Christian community which produced them.

II. The Parable of the Weeds and the Wheat (Matt 13:24-29, 36-43//*Gos. Thom.* 57)

The parable of the Weeds and the Wheat⁶ (often referred to as the *Wheat and Tares*) makes a clear and compelling connection between the delay of the *Parousia* and the inclusion of Gentiles

⁵ Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 393.

⁶ We have chosen to refer to the parable as “Weeds and Wheat” because in its development in Matt 13 it is clear that, like the parable of the Sower/Soils, the author is primarily concerned with the presence of “unbelief and its

in the early Christian community. However, the Matthean version of the parable presents the interpreter with significant challenges due to its placement in the carefully crafted parable discourse of Matt 13 and the fact that the parable and its interpretation are separated into two parts (the parable itself appears in 13:24-29 and its interpretation in 13:36-43). Between the two parts, Matthew has placed the parable of the Mustard Seed (vv. 31-32), the parable/simile of the Leaven (v. 33), and an editorial comment explaining why Jesus spoke in parables (vv. 34-35). We will argue that the parable's context and the allegorical identification of the fields with the *world* (ὁ κόσμος) indicate that Matthew has Gentile inclusion in mind. Also, we will argue that the metaphor of the slow process of vegetative growth until the harvest and the usage of certain allegorical terms are allusions to the *Parousia's* delay in the parable of the Weeds and the Wheat. However, it is impossible to make this argument without addressing several critical issues of organization and interpretation which will support our argument.

A. Organization of the Parable, Its Interpretation, and Their Relationship with One Another

The reader of Matt 13 is immediately struck by the fact that two of the parables, the parable of the Sower/Soils in 13:3-23 and the parable of the Weeds and Wheat in 13:24-43, are accompanied by allegorical interpretations. These interpretations are separated from the main bodies of their corresponding parables by questions/comments about the hidden and mysterious nature of parables.⁷ Additionally, the thoughtful reader cannot overlook the surprising change in the settings and audiences associated with the interludes and the interpretations of the parables of

effects" (i.e., the weeds) and secondarily with of the spread of the Gospel (i.e., the wheat). See Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew VIII-XVIII*, 408.

⁷ Matt prefaces the interlude in the parable of the Sower/Soils in 13:10 with Καὶ προσελθόντες οἱ μαθηταὶ εἶπαν αὐτῷ· διὰ τί ἐν **παραβολαῖς** λαλεῖς αὐτοῖς ("The disciples came to him and asked, 'Why do you speak to the people in parables?'). The interlude of the parable of the Weeds and the Wheat concludes with a rejoinder to the disciples' question in 13:34: ταῦτα πάντα **ἐλάλησεν** ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐν **παραβολαῖς** τοῖς ὄχλοις καὶ χωρὶς **παραβολῆς** οὐδὲν **ἐλάλει** αὐτοῖς ("Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable").

the Sower/Soils and the Weeds and the Wheat. The introduction to Matt 13 indicates that Jesus spoke before large crowds (v. 2). But, in the interpretations to the parables of the Sower/Soils and the Weeds and Wheat, Jesus speaks privately with his disciples.⁸ Of the two transitions from speaking to the crowds to speaking privately with the disciples, v. 36 is the most pronounced. No analysis of Matt 13 can afford to overlook the “clear transition point” in 13:36.⁹

Further evidence that 13:36 is indeed a “clear transition point” is the use of terminology unique to Matthew and the new narrative focus in vv. 36-43. With regard to the new narrative focus, Luz notes that the following items in the parable are not interpreted: the servants, the ripe grain, the bundles, the barn, and “the waiting until the end” (i.e., the delay of the *Parousia*).¹⁰ Similarly, Luz and other interpreters also argue that the language of vv. 36-43 (and especially vv. 40-43) contains many words and phrases that are unique to or favored by Matthew.¹¹ Thus, the

⁸ 13:10 indicates that the disciples asked Jesus privately why he spoke in parables. Afterwards Jesus explains the mystery or secret (μυστήριον) of the Kingdom with several quotations from the Prophets. With regard to the parable of the Weeds, the reader must assume that after the interpretation of the parable of the Sower/Soils, Jesus has again addressed the crowds since there is no clear indication in the transitional phrase of vs. 24 (Ἄλλην παραβολὴν παρέθηκεν αὐτοῖς λέγων) where αὐτοῖς could just as easily refer to the crowds as the disciples. Both “crowds” and “disciples” would require masculine plural dative pronouns. However, 13:36 contains a decisive indication that Jesus was speaking to the crowds in the parable of the Weeds and the Wheat in 13:24-29: Τότε ἀφῆς τοὺς ὄχλους ἦλθεν εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν (“Then he left the crowd and went into the house”).

⁹ In fact Hagner argues that of the two transitional points, vs. 10 and vs. 36, it is the latter which is decisive for the structure of the entire chapter: “This has led several scholars to speak broadly of two main parts comprising the discourse, vv 3-35 and 36-52. No convincing structural analysis can afford to ignore this break, despite the fact that such a division separates the parable of the weeds from its interpretation (the change of scene is indeed due to the purposeful giving of the interpretation in private). This change of audience is a major factor to which all other structural features must subordinate.” Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 364-65.

¹⁰ Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 8-20* (Hermenia; Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2001), 267-268.

¹¹ Further evidence of words and phrases favored by Matt are τότε (“when”) in vs. 36, συντελεία τοῦ αἰῶνος (“end of the age”) in vs. 40, ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων (“weeping and gnashing of teeth”) in vs. 42. See Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 267-68, “I think that both parts of the interpretation [vs 36-39 and 40-43] come from Matt. It is linguistically possible.” Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew VIII-XVIII*, 426, argue: “The word statistics are decisive. Some indeed have thought it possible that the text rests upon an interpretation . . . But we remain skeptical. 13.36-43 shows so many signs of Matthew’s hand that the quest to discover behind it something pre-Matthean seems hopeless.”

use of images and vocabulary indicate that Matthew has taken a pre-existing tradition in the parable of the Weeds and Wheat and wedded it to material of his own in the interpretation.¹²

In the abrupt transition of v. 36 and the unique Matthean character of the material of vv. 36-43, the reader confronts a challenge of interpretation inherent in Matthew's organization. What is the relationship of the parable of the Weeds and Wheat (13:24-30) with its interpretation (13:36-43)? For our argument, this is a key question because the most obvious allusion to Gentile inclusion comes in the interpretation while the parable itself addresses the delay of the *Parousia* (see below). J. D. Kingsbury argues that the parable of the Weeds and Wheat and its interpretation are so different that "the interpreter should deal with each unit separately" despite the "linguistic similarity" and the connection made by the disciples' question in v. 36 to the parable itself.¹³ The situation is further muddled since the interpretation itself can be divided into two parts: the allegorical explanation of terms (vv. 37-39) and the apocalyptic description of the harvest (vv. 40-43).¹⁴

Gospel of Thomas logion 57 does not shed light on the relationship between the parable of the Weeds and Wheat and its interpretation.¹⁵ Several commentators have compellingly argued that logion 57 is nothing more than an abbreviation of the Matthean parable and its interpretation

¹² See Herman Hendrickx, *The Parables of Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper Row, 1986), 67.

¹³ See Kingsbury, *The Parables of Jesus in Matthew 13*, 94: "A close examination will show that the affinity between the parable of the Tares and the Interpretation is formal and accidental rather than real and essential, so that the interpreter should properly deal with each unit separately."

¹⁴ See Hendrickx, *The Parables*, 67 and Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 81.

¹⁵ The Lambdin translation of logion 57 is as follows: "Jesus said, 'The kingdom of the father is like a man who had good seed. His enemy came by night and sowed weeds among the good seed. The man did not allow them to pull up the weeds; he said to them, 'I am afraid that you will go intending to pull up the weeds and pull up the wheat along with them.' For on the day of the harvest the weeds will be plainly visible, and they will be pulled up and burned.'" James Robinson, ed., *The Coptic Gnostic Library* (5 vols; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 2.52-93.

instead of a separate (or related) tradition.¹⁶ According to John Meier, the internal inconsistencies within the *Thomassine* version of the parable point to the fact that the author of *Gos. Thom.* awkwardly combined details from Matthew's parable (or Matthew's unique material sometimes called "M") and Matthew's interpretation.¹⁷ In fact, it is impossible to account for these inconsistencies in *Gos. Thom.* without appealing to the Matthean parable and its interpretation. For example, there is no antecedent to the third person plural pronoun referring to those who receive the master's command in logion 57 ("The man did not allow *them* to pull up the weeds; he said to *them*"). Some have called the omission of the growth of the weeds and the wheat and the identity of "them" as examples of 'missing middles' in *Gos. Thom.*, which is an indication of literary dependence.¹⁸ If logion 57 is simply an abbreviation of Matthew (which seems to be the case), nothing can be gleaned from it that can help us shed light on the relationship between the Matthean parable of the Weeds and Wheat and its interpretation.

If the *Gos. Thom.* cannot shed light on the relationship between the parable of the Weeds and Wheat and its interpretation in Matthew, perhaps assistance can be found closer at hand, in the parable of the Seed Growing Secretly (Mark 4:26-29). The parable of the Weeds and the Wheat

¹⁶ John P. Meier, "The Parable of the Wheat and the Weeds (Matt 13:24-30): Is Thomas's Version (Logion 57) Independent?" *JBL* 131.4 (2012), 718-719. See also Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew VIII-XVIII*, 415 and Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 382-383.

¹⁷ Meier, "The Parable of the Wheat and the Weeds," 721-722. Regarding the inconsistencies Meier writes, "More strikingly, *Thomas* lacks the narrative core of the parable, that is, the whole succession of events that makes the denouement intelligible: the growth of the plants bearing grain, the simultaneous appearance of the weeds, the servants approaching the householder with a question about the origin of the weeds in a field sown with good seed, the householder's declaration that this is the work of an enemy, and the servants' suggestion that they gather up the weeds (Matt 13:26-28)." Meier, "The Parable of the Wheat and the Weeds," 719.

¹⁸ Simon Gathercole, *The Gospel of Thomas*, 433, notes, "Here the editor of the parable has clearly missed out the central part of the story which (a) describes the sprouting of the weeds, and (b) introduces the farm workers who see a need to get rid of these weeds (cf. Matt. 13.26-28). There is a pattern of 'missing middles' in *Thomas* . . . Both these events are assumed in the reference to the farmer not allowing the unspecified 'them' to uproot the weeds. Since there is no antecedent in *Thomas*' parable, the parable here is probably an abbreviation of an earlier form, probably that of Matt."

in Matt 13 stands in place of the parable of the Seed Growing Secretly in Mark 4.¹⁹ In addition to sharing a similarity in terms of placement/order, both Mark 4 and Matt 13 have striking verbal similarities.²⁰ For example, seeds, sleep, growth, and harvest are all important in both of the parables.²¹ However, the development and main points of these parables stand in marked contrast—Matthew focuses on the presence of the weeds mixed with the wheat while Mark is entirely interested in the steady growth of the seed during the “night and day” without intervention. In Kingsbury’s opinion no definitive explanation can be given as to why Matthew does not include the parable of the Seed Growing Secretly, “One thing appears certain: the relationship between the parable of the Seed Growing Secretly and that of the Tares is best explained in terms of substitution.”²² Another thing is certain: Mark provides no allegorical explanation of the Seed Growing Secretly as we find in the preceding parable of the Sower/Soils and Matthew’s parable of the Weeds and Wheat. Thus, the parable of the Seed Growing Secretly cannot help us understand the relationship between Matthew’s parable of the Weeds and Wheat and its interpretation. We must turn to the parable of the Weeds and Wheat and its interpretation themselves to ascertain their relationship.

Despite the differences in terminology and organization between the parable of the Weeds and Wheat and its interpretation, including the abrupt transition in v. 36, the claim that the parable and its interpretation are entirely independent is a disservice to Matthew’s literary

¹⁹ In Mark, there are several sayings (4:21-24) between the parable of the Sower/Soils and the Seed Growing Secretly. Matt has dispersed these sayings throughout his Gospel. For example, Matt places the saying of Mark 4:21 in his Sermon on the Mount in 5:15. Matt places the saying about hidden things (Mark 4:22-23) in 10:26. The Markan saying on the measure found in 4:24 appears in Matthew’s Sermon on Mount in 7:2. Finally, Matt has incorporated the saying of Mark 4:25 into his parable discourse at 13:12. After accounting for Matthew’s dispersal of these sayings, the next parable we would expect in Matt after the Sower/Soils (assuming Markan priority) is the parable of the Seed Growing Secretly.

²⁰ Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 253.

²¹ Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 383.

²² Kingsbury, *The Parables of Jesus*, 64-65.

acumen. Matthew 13 is a highly organized discourse²³ in which the author portrays the rift that has developed between Matthew's community and its Jewish opponents.²⁴ This rift is the key to unlocking the relationship between the parable and its interpretation. However, before going any further, we need to reflect on the redaction of the parable itself.

In its earliest tradition, the parable the Weeds and the Wheat contained an account of sowing (v. 24), the appearance and growth of the weeds and wheat together (v. 26), and a reference to the separation of the two at the harvest (v. 30).²⁵ Thus it likely resembled the parable of the Dragnet (13:47-50) where the fish are sorted. The parable that appears in the Gospel of Matthew comes from Matthew's special source.²⁶ Matthew and/or his source have likely added the references to the enemy's sowing of weeds (v. 25) and the subsequent dialogue between the landholder and his servants (vv. 27-30).²⁷ The focus of the parable in Matthew is patience in view of a delayed eschatological consummation.²⁸ Therefore, the key verse of Matthew's parable is 13:30a, "Let both grow side by side until the harvest."²⁹ According to Matthew's parable, the *delay* or time of growth must be allowed to run its course.

²³ Warren Carter and John Paul Heil, *Matthew's Parables, Audience-Orientated Perspectives* (CBQMS 30; Washington, D.C.: The Catholic Bible Association of America, 1998), 65-67, make a strong case for the organization of Matt 13 around the question of understanding (or lack of) by the crowds and disciples. According to Carter and Heil, the basic narrative progression of Matt 13 is as follows: (1) Matt 13:1-9: Audience of the Crowds (with disciples); (2) Matt 13:10-23: Audience of the Disciples (without crowds); (3) Matt 13:24-35: Audience of the Crowds (with disciples); (4) Matt 13:36-52: Audience of Disciples (without the crowds).

²⁴ Daniel Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew* (SP; Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 208.

²⁵ Hendrickx, *The Parables*, 57-58.

²⁶ Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 392.

²⁷ Hendrickx, *The Parables*, 58.

²⁸ Jeremias, *Parables*, 81, notes, "The following points are to be observed in this interpretation: (1) It passes over in silence the obvious motive of the parable, namely, the exhortation to patience, thus missing the point of the parable. (2) It contains certain expressions, which, on linguistic grounds, Jesus can hardly have used."

²⁹ Kingsbury, *The Parables of Jesus*, 74, nicely captures the idea, "But despite the eschatological character of v. 30, the central thought of the parable of the Tares is not fixed on the Judgment *per se*. Rather it is expressed in the injunction 'Let both grow side by side until the harvest' (v. 30a). This injunction contains several emphases. To begin with, it presupposes the passage of time; hence it documents the delay of the Parousia as experienced by Matthew's Church. Further, the words 'Let both grow side by side' are a declaration to Matthew's Church to the

But why must Matthew's community wait patiently? The required patience relates to the above-mentioned rift between Matthew's community and its opponents. On one side of the rift is Matthew's community represented by Jesus' disciples, who receive "secret" knowledge (13:11) in the interpretations of the Sower/Soils and Weeds and Wheat. On the other are Matthew's Jewish opponents, represented by the crowds who cannot understand Jesus' discourse (13:35).³⁰ The parable of the Weeds and the Wheat shows why, during the lengthening interim period between Easter and the *Parousia* (i.e., the delay), the preaching of the Gospel does not produce a good harvest in Israel.³¹ The devil has placed unresponsive hearers in the midst of the responsive (cf., the "birds" in 13:4 and 19).³² The presence of certain OT quotations which heap prophetic judgment on the Jewish crowds and opponents further highlight this rift in Matt 13:14-15, 35.³³

effect that, again, it is the resolve of Jesus Kyrios that for the time being the wheat and darnel, i.e. true Israel, which has responded to the Word, and unbelieving Israel, which has rejected the Word, are not to be irrevocably cut off from each other."

³⁰ Kingsbury, *The Parables*, 88-89, notes that the difference between Mark 4:33 ("With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand") and Matt 13:34 ("Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable") accentuates "the fact that intercourse between the two groups is characterized by the speaking in parables, i.e. what for the crowds is incomprehensible speech. Accordingly, the function of v. 34 is to recapitulate 13:1-33 by depicting the impasse that exists between Jesus (and the Church) and the Jews (cf. chaps. 11-12)."

³¹ Konradt, *Israel*, 255, offers a competing viewpoint which argues that in Matt 13 there is no distinction made between a hardened Israel and the disciples who "understand" the parables. Konradt writes, "The parable does not speak, as we have seen, of the ministry's complete failure, but rather (ultimately) places successful and unsuccessful sowing side by side, or opposite one another, and thus reflects on how the community emerges within Israel and from Israel . . . The text is not concerned here with a contrast between Israel's failure on the one hand and the emergence of the ecclesia on the other." Instead, Matt views his community of disciples as "the best part of Israel." Konradt, *Israel*, 255.

³² Carter and Heil, *Matthew's Parables*, 79.

³³ Matt (and Mark) quotes the commissioning account of Prophet Isaiah (Isa 6:9-10). The second quotation, found in the interlude between the parable of the Weeds and Wheat, is from Ps 78:2 and does not carry the strong emphasis on judgment. Konradt, *Israel*, 256, argues that Matt does not use the quotation of Isa 6:9-10 as a condemnation of the hardness of Israel to Jesus' message. However, Konradt fails to recognize that in its context, Isaiah's commission account contains a message of judgment on Israel. In choosing to quote Isaiah's commission account, Matt necessarily makes a statement about the disposition of many in Israel despite Konradt's effort to claim otherwise. Kingsbury, *The Parables of Jesus*, 67 argues that Matt does indeed have in mind the Jewish crowds in his quotation of Isa.

During the period of delay or growth, Matthew's community must patiently await its vindication and judgment upon its opponents.

The interpretation (13:36-43) of the parable of the Weeds and Wheat takes a slightly different but complementary perspective. Matthew's interpretation focuses on the *end*. At the harvest³⁴ or Final Judgment, God will separate those in Israel who have not responded positively during the period of planting and growth from those who have, including a good number of Gentiles. The ones who have responded will enjoy eternal blessedness while those who have not will receive eternal judgment (e.g., v. 42).³⁵ The focus on final judgment (cf. Matt 25:31-46 where the *nations* are judged) and the emphasis on the field being the *world* of the Gentiles, show us Matthew's perspective on the eschatological inclusion of Gentiles.³⁶ Another aspect of Matthew's perspective in the interpretation is the presence of recalcitrant elements of Israel conceptualized as "weeds," an idea obviously parallel with John the Baptist's warning to the Pharisees and Sadducees in 3:12 that God will burn the chaff and lay aside the wheat.³⁷ Without denying the importance of the differences between the parable itself and its Matthean interpretation in 13:36-43, it is preferable to see the two as complimentary instead of competing or contradictory.³⁸ The parable deals with the *delay* of the eschatological crisis while interpretation addresses the conclusion of it.

If the parable and its interpretation are indeed complementary, then we do not err in using the interpretation to shed light on the parable (and vice versa). This point is critical to our argument

³⁴ The concept of harvest and the Final Judgment will be discussed below.

³⁵ Kingsbury, *The Parables of Jesus*, 106-107.

³⁶ Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew VIII-XVIII*, 408-409.

³⁷ Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 256.

³⁸ Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables*, 198-199.

since the motif of delay is present in the parable itself while the allusion to Gentile inclusion appears in the interpretation.

B. Does the Parable of the Weeds and Wheat Refer to the Early Christian Community or the World?

Another critical point to our argument that the parable of the Weeds and the Wheat connects the motif of delay of the *Parousia* with Gentile inclusion is the problem of to whom the parable refers. Or to put it another way, is the parable's action (planting, growth, and harvest) referring to the world more broadly or the early Christian community? If the parable speaks only of the Christian community, then it is a discussion of church discipline roughly parallel to Matt 18 and does not refer at all to the largely Gentile world in which the church found itself at all.

Throughout the history of interpretation, many, including notable figures such as St. Augustine, have argued that the parable of the Weeds and Wheat is a discussion of the purity of the early Christian community.³⁹ For convenience we will call this the "ecclesiastical interpretation." Robert McIver argues this point from a more recent perspective, though there are several other modern discussions predating his work.⁴⁰ McIver argues,

This community is faced with the dilemma of what should be done about evil members. Just as the bearded darnel could not be initially distinguished from the wheat, these members are also hard to distinguish from other disciples of Jesus. Yet their fruitage appears to be evil. Surely they should be rooted out of the community, as the servants wished to root out the weeds. *But the message of the parable is that the community will remain a mixture of good and evil until the time of separation at the last judgment, and that the responsibility for the separation of good and evil belongs to God and his agents, not individual members of the community* [emphasis mine].⁴¹

³⁹ See Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew VIII-XVIII*, 428: "The parable of the tares has often been viewed as treating of church discipline, as being instruction to refrain from trying to create a church purified of sinners. Augustine championed this view in fighting the Donatists, and the text has been similarly used down through the centuries."

⁴⁰ See Robert McIver, "The Parable of the Weeds among the Wheat (Matt 13:24-30, 36-43) and the Relationship between the Kingdom and the Church," *JBL* 114.4 (1995), 643-659. See also Charles W.F. Smith, "The Mixed State of the Church in Matthew's Gospel," *JBL* 82.2 (1963): 149-168.

⁴¹ McIver, "The Parable of the Weeds among the Wheat," 649.

Thus, for McIver, the weeds (the ζιζάνιον or bearded darnel in v. 25) represent not those recipients in the *world* (i.e., the κόσμος of v. 38) who, after receiving the Gospel message, are unresponsive; but rather those who are unresponsive within the community of faith (i.e., false disciples). While the term ἐκκλησία (e.g., 18:15-19) is not mentioned in parable of the Weeds and Wheat, those holding to the ecclesiastical interpretation would argue that Jesus' warning is given to the church and the concern is for the Christian community to avoid bruising battles over purity and patiently await the Son of Man at his *Parousia* to sort things out.⁴²

There are some serious short-comings with the ecclesiastical understanding of the parable of the Weeds and the Wheat (and its interpretation). Jeremias argues the change from the “Kingdom of the Son” (which allegedly refers to a pre-*Parousia* kingdom) in v. 41 to the “Kingdom of the Father” (which allegedly refers to a post-*Parousia* kingdom) in v. 43 “is simply a designation for the church.”⁴³ However, this is a simplistic deduction. Had Matthew wanted to speak of the church in the parable of the Weeds and Wheat, he had a clear term available with which to do that (ἐκκλησία), a term to which he would connect church discipline later in his Gospel.⁴⁴

But if we grant that the references in the parable's interpretation refer to the church, then we are faced with an outright contradiction in Matthew's Gospel. Later, in Matt 18:15-20, Jesus will command *excommunication* instead of patient endurance (e.g., the parable of the Weeds and Wheat) as a way to address impurity in the church. Davies and Allison write, “Confirming this

⁴² W. F. Smith, “The Mixed State of the Church,” 153, writes: “The expression ‘the field is the world’ does suggest the problem of the church in the world but turns out to be that of the world in the church.”

⁴³ Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 82: “Most unusual of all is the statement that the angels will gather ‘out of his (i.e., the Son of Man's) kingdom’ all the false guides and their followers (v. 41) since the expression . . . is peculiar to Matt (in the New Testament it only occurs in Matt. 13:41; 16:28), and the conception of the Kingdom of Christ is foreign to the oldest stratum of tradition; in our passages the ‘Kingdom of the Son of Man’ (v. 41), which at the *Parousia* (v. 40) is replaced by the Kingdom of God (v. 43), is simply a designation of the Church.”

⁴⁴ See Matt 16:18 and 18:17 for the uses of this ἐκκλησία.

judgment is 18.15-20, which shows us that Matthew's church practiced excommunication; that is, the community pulled up "Christian weeds" when it was necessary. It did not wait for the eschaton to sort the good from the bad."⁴⁵ How could the same Matthew who suggests that those who cause "one of these little ones" (a Matthean code-phrase for Christian community members⁴⁶) to sin would be better off thrown into the sea with a millstone around their necks (18:5-6) also counsel the Christian community to wait until the *Parousia* for the Son of Man to winnow false disciples out of the church? The ecclesiastical interpretation just does not fit into the broader Matthean context.

A second objection to the ecclesiastical interpretation of the parable of the Weeds and Wheat is that the context of the parable in no way refers to church discipline, but instead, as we have argued above, addresses the situation in which Matthew tries to come to grips with the negative response of many in Israel to Jesus and his message.⁴⁷ The context of our parable demonstrates that though many (especially in Israel) would hear the Christian message, few would accept it, leaving the Christian community frustrated and confused. Blomberg captures this idea nicely:

The foremost danger in Jesus' mind was the attitude of his supporters, who were already growing discontented with the opposition they faced. Like the disciples who wanted to call down fire from heaven on the unreceptive Samaritans (Lk 9:54), they would have preferred to invoke God's judgment rather more directly on their opponents. In reply, Jesus enjoins patience and alerts them to expect continued hostility from those who would reject his message.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew VIII-XVIII*, 408. See also page 428.

⁴⁶ For a discussion of the identity of "the little ones" as disciples of Jesus, see Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 522.

⁴⁷ Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew VIII-XVIII*, 428. On page 406 Davies and Allison write, "We are persuaded that instead of conjuring up some hypothetical Matthean *Sitz im Leben* the text itself and its literary context should be the key to interpretation."

⁴⁸ Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables*, 200.

Without denying the historical utility of the parable of the Weeds and Wheat for life in a “mixed church,” the original context of the parable shows that it was not Matthew’s intention to deal with this problem.

Since we have established a connection between the parable and its interpretation above, the primary and most compelling reason to reject the ecclesiological interpretation is the simple fact that according to Matthew’s interpretation the harvest field is the *world* (v. 38: ὁ δὲ ἀγρός ἐστὶν ὁ κόσμος) and not the *church*. Luz points out,

In Matthew the Son of Man is the Lord of judgment who accompanies the church on its entire way through lowliness, suffering, and resurrection. The field is the world. In 5:14 the disciples were the light of the world. Jesus announces here a universal claim for his message. Thus the field is not the church.⁴⁹

Shortly we will analyze the significance of κόσμος in our parable and its interpretation, but it should suffice to say that this is a Matthean reference for the Gentile world.⁵⁰ In summary, the ecclesiastical interpretation fails to provide a compelling explanation of the parable of the Weeds and Wheat, leaving open the possibility of connecting the theme of the delay of the *Parousia* with Gentile inclusion.

C. The Delay of the *Parousia* and the Parable of the Weeds and Wheat

In Chapter One we argued that the delay of the *Parousia*, while not wholly unforeseen, presented the early Christian community with a significant theological dilemma. In other words, while not unexpected, the experience of delay was *unwelcome*, requiring the development of literary motifs to assist the community to explain and give significance to the period in its literature. Like a late bridegroom or a tarrying master, the concept of the slow and steady growth

⁴⁹ Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 268.

⁵⁰ Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 393, writes, “The field, as explicitly identified as ὁ κόσμος, ‘the world,’ cannot have been understood as the Church by the evangelist or his readers. This identification of the field as the world does, however, point in itself to the worldwide mission of the Church in the spread of the gospel (cf. 24:14; 28:19).”

of a crop until the final harvest was useful in explaining and giving significance to the delay. In order to see this link, we need to place the images of growth with the corresponding harvest into the context of the delay of the *Parousia* as developed in the early Christian literature.

1. The Concept of Harvest and the Delay of the *Parousia*

In the NT, harvest is a concept fraught with eschatological significance, especially since it often refers to the *Parousia* of the Son of Man, the consummation, and the ensuing judgment.⁵¹ In the OT, both the Prophets Joel (3:13) and Jeremiah (51:33) use harvest to represent climactic judgment. However, the NT connection between harvest and final judgment apparently was not an invention of Jesus according to the Gospel writers as it appears on the lips of John the Baptist in Matt 3:12/Luke 3:17.⁵² The metaphor of the harvest appears in other locations throughout the NT, predominantly in eschatological contexts such as Mark 4:29,⁵³ John 4:36-48, and Rev 14:15.⁵⁴ Another important use of the harvest motif is in the commissioning accounts of the Twelve (Matt 9:37-38) and the Seventy-Two (Luke 10:2), though even these accounts are full of apocalyptic and eschatological imagery.

It is not surprising that the harvest is part of the preaching of both Jesus and John the Baptist since it was a popular metaphor in roughly contemporaneous Jewish literature. In reflecting

⁵¹Friedrich Hauck, “θερίζω, θερισμός,” in *TDNT* 3:133.

⁵² Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 256. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 199, writes: “Is it possible that Jesus deliberately chose to echo John’s preaching in this parable, but whereas John places the shovel in the Messiah’s hand to be used speedily. The parable indicates that the hour for the bundling and the burning has not yet arrived; the harvest belongs to an undisclosed future.”

⁵³ At conclusion of the parable of the Seed Growing Secretly, the Markan Jesus states: “As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest [θερισμός] has come” (Mark 4:29).

⁵⁴ Rev 14:15-16 states: “Then another angel came out of the temple and called in a loud voice to him who was sitting on the cloud, ‘Take your sickle and reap [θέρισον], because the time to reap [θερίσαι] has come, for the harvest [θερισμός] of the earth is ripe.’ So he who was seated on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was harvested [ἐθερίσθη].”

about the oppression at the hands of the Gentiles, the author of 4 Ezra 4:22-37⁵⁵ discusses the harvest as a time of winnowing and threshing when the evil will be separated from the good.⁵⁶ Clearly for Ezra, the harvest was an apocalyptic event anticipated at the end time.⁵⁷ Interestingly, in 4:33, Ezra anticipates the possibility of a delay since he asks with regard to the eschatological harvest, “How long and when will these things be?” The angel responds, “You do not hasten faster than the most High, for your haste is for yourself, but the Highest hastens on the behalf of many” (4:34).

In addition to 4 Ezra, the concept of eschatological harvest appears in 2 Bar. 70:2:

Behold, the days are coming and it will happen when the time of the world has ripened and the harvest of the seed of the evil ones and the good ones has come, that the Mighty One will cause to come over the earth and its inhabitants and its rulers confusion of the spirit and amazement of the heart.⁵⁸

The resemblance between 2 Bar. 70:2 and Matthew’s parable of the Weeds and Wheat with regard to the usage of harvest is striking.⁵⁹ Although the Second Apocalypse of Baruch,

⁵⁵ 4 Ezra is comprised of chapters 3-14 of 2 Esdras in the Apocrypha of English bibles. However, these chapters are referred to as “4 Ezra” in the Latin manuscripts and in most academic works.

⁵⁶ In 4:26-36 of the Metzger translation of 4 Ezra, Ezra describes the following conversation with the angel: “He answered me and said, ‘If you are alive, you will see, and if you live long, you will often marvel, because the age is hastening swiftly to its end. For it will not be able to bring the things that have been promised to the righteous in their appointed times, because this age is full of sadness and infirmities. For the evil about which you ask me has been sown, but the **harvest** of it has not yet come. If therefore that which has been **sown** is not **reaped**, and if the place where the evil has been sown does not pass away, the field where the good has been sown will not come. For a grain of evil seed was **sown** in Adam’s heart from the beginning, and how much ungodliness it has produced until now, and will produce until the time of **threshing** comes! Consider now for yourself how much fruit of ungodliness a grain of evil seed has produced. When heads of grain without number are **sown**, how great a **threshing** floor they will fill!’ Then I answered and said, ‘**How long and when will these things be?** Why are our years few and evil?’ He answered me and said, ‘You do not hasten faster than the Most High, for your haste is for yourself,’ but the Highest hastens on behalf of many. Did not the souls of the righteous in their chambers ask about these matters, saying, ‘**How long are we to remain here?** And when will come the **harvest** of our reward?’[emphasis mine].” Bruce Metzger, “The Fourth Book of Ezra,” in *OTP*, 1:517-560. William Barclay, *The Parables of Jesus* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 42, writes, “It is that indeed that leads us to the other side of the parable. It counsels patience on our part and bids us leave the judgment to God; but it includes the absolute certainty that someday selection will come. The dandelion and the wheat might be allowed to grow together for many days but in the end there came a harvest and a time of separation.”

⁵⁷ Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 393.

⁵⁸ Trans. A. F. J. Klijn, “2 (Syriac Apocalypse of) Baruch,” in *OTP*, 1:615-652.

⁵⁹ Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 393.

originally written in Hebrew,⁶⁰ likely dates to the time between the Jewish War and the Bar Kokhba revolt,⁶¹ it is unlikely to be related to a Christian source like Matthew.⁶² Another later example of the usage of harvest in an eschatological context may be found in the second and fourteenth books of the Sibylline Oracles.⁶³ The most reasonable explanation for the presence of eschatological harvest imagery in contemporaneous Christian and Jewish sources is that in the context of the late first century, harvest was a popular metaphor used in apocalyptic descriptions of upheaval surrounding the failure of the Jewish War and the destruction of the Second Temple in A.D. 70.⁶⁴

Thus Matthew, the other Synoptic Gospels, the OT, and even roughly contemporaneous Jewish literature connect harvest imagery with the apocalyptic judgment, which, to use the language of the early Christian community, was preceded by the *Parousia* of the Son of Man. Significantly, eschatological delay found its way into the harvest metaphor even in the roughly contemporaneous Jewish literature as we see from 4 Ezra 4:34.

2. The Image of Growth and the Delay of the *Parousia*

⁶⁰ Klijn, “2 (Syriac Apocalypse of) Baruch,” 1:616, argues, “The Greek version, most of which is lost, appears to have been translated from Hebrew. An original Hebrew version should be accepted because of the many parallels between 2 Baruch and other Jewish writings composed in Hebrew or Aramaic. In some cases the Syriac text is intelligible only after translating it into Hebrew. Finally, a translation of the Syriac text into Hebrew restores a play on words apparently contained in the original.”

⁶¹ Michael Stone and Matthias Henze, *4 Ezra and 2 Baruch* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 10.

⁶² Klijn, “2 (Syriac Apocalypse of) Baruch,” 1:619, writes, “It is striking that there are many parallels to the New Testament. It is, of course, impossible to prove dependency on the part of the author. He most likely shared with the New Testament authors a dependency on apocalyptic imagery.”

⁶³ Sib. Or., 2:160: “O very wretched dread evildoers of the last generation, infantile, who do not understand that when the species of females does not give birth, the harvest of articulate men has come.” J. J. Collins argues that this oracle can be dated anywhere from 30 B.C. to A. D. 250. Trans. J. J. Collins, “Syblline Oracles,” in *OTP*, 1:317-472. See also 14:355: “On the earth evil will sink into the wondrous sea. Then the harvest of articulate men is near. A strong necessity insists that these things be accomplished. Then no other chance wayfarer will say that the race of articulate men will cease to be, though they perish. Then the holy nation will hold sway over the earth for all ages, with their mighty children.” With regard to the dating of the 14th book, Collins suggests a very late date such as the seventh century A.D. See J. J. Collins, “Syblline Oracles,” 1:459.

⁶⁴ Klijn, “2 (Syriac Apocalypse of) Baruch,” 1:619.

We have shown that harvest represents the apocalyptic judgment preceded by the *Parousia*. Now we turn our attention to hints in the parable that suggest that the *Parousia* and accompanying harvest may be delayed due to the metaphor of slow and steady growth found in our parable and its interpretation. There are several points of contact. First, we can appeal to the vocabulary used in the growth motif of the parable. Consider the “sleeping” (καθεύδω) of the “people” in 13:25. Hendrickx notes καθεύδω is a significant term in the allegorical vocabulary of the NT’s discussion of the delay and that its appearance in the parable of the Weeds and Wheat is also significant,

The expression ‘while men (people) were sleeping’ exceeds the setting of the beginning of this parable. We would have expected: ‘while the farmer was sleeping’. The narrator depicts a general situation which goes far beyond that of the farmer’s field. ‘To sleep’ (Greek *katheudein*) often has in the New Testament a metaphorical meaning. It refers then the people’s attitude towards the (delayed) parousia (Mt 25:5; Mk 13:36; I Thess 5:6, 7).⁶⁵

Hendrickx is correct to notice correspondence between καθεύδω and the concepts of delay of the *Parousia* in the parable of the Virgins (Matt 25:1-13) and 1 Thess 5:13-18. However, in these two texts the sleep refers to death and not “the people’s attitude towards the (delayed) parousia” as Hendrickx suggests.⁶⁶ In the conclusion of the Markan parable of the Doorkeeper (Mark 13:36: “If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping [καθεύδοντας]”), καθεύδω reflects more an attitude or ethical orientation. This is true also of the Gethsemane narratives (Matt 26:36-46//Mark 14:32-42//Luke 22:40-46) and the other examples of the “Watchfulness Parenthesis” where καθεύδω is contrasted with γρηγορέω (to be awake or watchful) for the

⁶⁵ Hendrickx, *The Parables of Jesus*, 54.

⁶⁶ Balabanski, *Eschatology in the Making*, 52, 54. See also 1 Cor 15:51: “We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed.”

unexpected arrival of the Son of Man.⁶⁷ We cannot without a doubt claim that the presence of καθεύδω in 13:25 is incontrovertible evidence that Matthew had in mind the delay of the *Parousia*. However, as Hendrickx acknowledges, given the prominence of καθεύδω/γρηγορέω in the early Christian eschatological parenesis and the unexplained appearance of plural sleepers in v. 25 after the mention of a singular master in v. 24, Matthew could very likely have a delayed *Parousia* in view.

Secondly, as we mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, simply the nature of the process of slow and steady growth until the harvest is, in and of itself, a powerful suggestion that Matthew has the delay of the *Parousia* in mind. The master's servants want to hasten the reckoning by separating the weeds from the wheat. However, the master's answer to the zealous husbandmen in v. 30, which is also the "climax" of the parable,⁶⁸ speaks powerfully of delay: "Let both [i.e., the wheat and the weeds] grow together until the harvest [ἕως τοῦ θερισμοῦ]."⁶⁹ Because the roots of the weeds and wheat are intertwined together, "the removal of the tares would destroy both plants. The only way to salvage the crop is to wait for the harvest. Hence the

⁶⁷ The following are some other expressions of the themes of sleep versus wakefulness/watchfulness: Matt 24:42-44/Luke 12:39-40; Luke 12:35-38 (cf. Mark 13:35-37); Rom 13:11-14 (cf. Eph 5:8-14); Thess 5:1-11; Rev 3:3; and 16:15.

⁶⁸ Kingsbury writes: "But despite the eschatological character of v. 30, the central thought of the parable of the Tares is not fixed on the Judgment *per se* [emphasis his]. Rather it is expressed in the injunction 'Let both grow side by side until the harvest' (v. 30a). This injunction contains several emphases. To begin with, it presupposes the passage of time; hence it documents the delay of the Parousia as experienced by Matthew's Church. Further, the words 'Let both grow side by side' are a declaration to Matthew's Church to the effect that, again, it is the resolve of Jesus Kyrios that for the time being the wheat and darnel, i.e. true Israel, which has responded to the Word, and unbelieving Israel, which has rejected the Word, are not to be irrevocably cut off from each other." Kingsbury, *The Parables of Jesus*, 74

⁶⁹ Hendrickx, *The Parables of Jesus*, 57, writes: "The parable reaches its climax in the positive part of the householder's answer. Verse 30a, 'let both grow together until the harvest', emphasizes several points. Firstly, it implies a certain passage of time. Secondly, the clause, 'let both grow together', is also a clear assertion that at this stage the wheat and the weeds are not to be irrevocably separated. Thirdly, this separation should wait 'until the harvest'."

wise landowner decides to delay the removal of the tares from among the wheat.”⁷⁰ Thus, if we consider the parable of Weeds and the Wheat, “The key point here, which will be developed further in this chapter [Matt 13], is that it is not yet the time of the harvest (i.e., eschatological judgment) and thus not yet the time for the separating of the weeds from the wheat.”⁷¹ Regardless of what significance we derive from terms like *καθεύδω*, the very nature of the images and expressions of a period of growth within the parable demonstrate that Matthew has the delay of the *Parousia* in mind. In early Christian eschatology, the *Parousia* precedes the eschatological judgment (i.e., the harvest), the final separation of the weeds from the wheat.⁷²

D. Gentile Inclusion and the Parable of the Weeds and the Wheat

Now that we have shown the presence of the delay motif in the parable of the Weeds and the Wheat, we turn our attention to Gentile inclusion. Two things are decisive in this regard. The context of the parable of the Weeds and Wheat and the presence of the term *ὁ κόσμος* in v. 38 and its associated vocabulary in the parable’s interpretation (13:36-43).

1. The Context of the Parable of the Weeds and Wheat, its Interpretation, and Gentile Inclusion

In our discussion of some important issues of interpretation and organization, we have already highlighted the fact that Matt 13 as a discourse addresses the rift that has developed between the Matthean community represented by the disciples (who receive the “secret” knowledge in the interpretations of the Sower/Soils and Weeds and Wheat) and the broader

⁷⁰ Brad Young, *The Parables, Jewish Tradition and Christian Interpretation* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1998), 291-2912.

⁷¹ Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 384.

⁷² Hendrickx, *The Parables of Jesus*, 67, argues this point, “Properly speaking, it [the harvest] means the fulfilment of a period of time and is not a cosmological but a temporal-historical term. Matt speaks of the fulfilment and completion of saving history, which essentially means the final divine success, the final coming of the Messiah. For the Christians it became clearer all the time that the inauguration was to be distinguished from the fulfilment (Christ’s ‘first’ and ‘second’ coming). It was exactly this unexpected interregnum which created the problem the parable is talking about.”

community of Israel, represented by the crowds (to whom Jesus' discourse is incomprehensible).⁷³ Thus, Matt 13 raises the question of the hardness of some in Israel who cannot understand and accept Jesus' message and answers the question by *excluding* them, much like the parable of the Tenants (Mark 12:1-12//Matt 21:33-46//Luke 20:9-19//*Gos. Thom.* 65).⁷⁴ According to Kingsbury, this is exactly the message that the interlude (between the parable and the interpretation) conveys in v. 34-35.⁷⁵ Thus, the context of Matt 13 is one that challenges some in Israel and threatens them with exclusion through the form of parabolic discourse—a form incomprehensible to those lacking faith.⁷⁶ The theme of Jewish rejection appears in the context of the Weeds and Wheat parable by means of the threat of exclusion (13:13-15, 34-35) against those in Israel who could not understand Jesus' discourse.

Obviously, suggesting the context of the parable of the Weeds and Wheat refers to the exclusion of some in Israel is not the same as arguing that it addresses Gentile inclusion. However, in Chapter Three, we saw that the themes of the exclusion of some in Israel and inclusion of the Gentiles appear side-by-side.⁷⁷ Therefore, when Matthew discusses the exclusion of some in Israel, the reader should expect Gentile inclusion as well.

⁷³ Kingsbury, *The Parables*, 88-89.

⁷⁴ Konradt, *Isreal*, 258, points out that Matthew's parables discourse does not exclude *all* of Israel, but instead focuses on the inclusion of a community of disciples formed from within Israel, "We can conclude that Matt 13:3-23 does not speak of the hardening of hearts of all Israel; rather, the disciples appear as a group that has emerged (and continues to exist) through Jesus' ministry in Israel." Konradt's preoccupation is to show that Matt does not set up a dualism between Israel and the early Christian community as others have argued. See Konradt, *Isreal*, 258-259.

⁷⁵ Kingsbury, *The Parables*, 88-89, writes, "Accordingly, the function of v. 34 is to recapitulate 13:1-33 by depicting the impasse that exists between Jesus (and the Church) and the Jews (cf. chaps. 11-12)."

⁷⁶ Bird, *Jesus and the Origins*, 130-131, discusses this concept through the parables, including the parable of the Weeds and Wheat, with relation to the category of Israel's election.

⁷⁷ For example, consider the "others who receive the vineyard" in the place of the tenants in the parable of the Tenants (Mark 12:1-12//Matt 21:33-46//Luke 20:9-19//*Gos. Thom.* 65) and the "people coming from the east, west, north and south" to take the place of Jesus' Jewish opponents at the eschatological feast in Luke's parable of the Shut Door (13:22-30).

In the latter half of this chapter we will study the parable of the Mustard Seed, couched in the interlude (13:31-34) between the parable of the Weeds and Wheat and its interpretation. The most extraordinary image in the parable of the Mustard Seed is the spreading tree sheltering the birds of the air (v. 32). While there is not unanimity, most scholars believe this is a reference to Dan 4:11-12; Ezek 17:23; and 31:6. According to Jeremias, the image of the spreading tree with the nesting birds is an image of a resurgent Israel to whom the Gentile nations come seeking to ally themselves with YHWH and his covenant people (i.e., the image of the Eschatological Pilgrimage).⁷⁸ Thus, at the center of the parable of the Weeds and its interpretation (i.e., the interlude between the two), there is a reference to Gentile inclusion. Clearly, Gentile inclusion is an important part of the literary context of our parable.

2. Ὁ Κόσμος and Gentile Inclusion in the Interpretation of the Parable of the Weeds and Wheat

As it stands in Matthew and *Gos. Thom.*, there is no link to Gentile inclusion *within* the parable of the Weeds and Wheat itself. However, as we have already hinted, in the parable's Matthean interpretation (13:36-43), there is a strong connection in the term κόσμος and the associated vocabulary of v. 38. We must make two comments regarding this claim. First, we have already argued above⁷⁹ that there is a *fundamental literary connection* between the parable in 13:24-30 and its interpretation in vv. 36-43, justifying our using the former to shed light on the latter. Secondly, in discussing the significance of the term κόσμος, we are not arguing that Gentile inclusion is the *main point* of the parable's interpretation as the delay was the main point of the parable itself. Instead, the main point of the interpretation is the final judgment at the end

⁷⁸ Jeremias, *Jesus' Promise*, 68-69.

⁷⁹ See pages 206-210 in this chapter.

of the age for those in Israel who reject the message of the early Christian community.⁸⁰ With these comments noted, let us analyze the motif of Gentile inclusion in the interpretation of the parable.

As we reflect on the motif of Gentile inclusion expressed in the term κόσμος, it is important to recognize that Matthew's use of the associated terms in v. 38 of the good seed/wheat (equated with the "sons of the kingdom" or οἱ υἱοὶ τῆς βασιλείας) and weeds (equated with the "sons of the evil one" or οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ πονηροῦ) in relation to the "field of the world" is unconventional. In the later rabbinic literature, the wheat represented Israel while the weeds represented the oppressive Gentile nations.⁸¹ In fact, Brad Young has collected a number of rabbinic parables in which just such comparisons are made.⁸²

But this usage of terms was not only unconventional in the later rabbinic period. Matthew hints that his language was unconventional in his own time. In the parable's interpretation those who traditionally considered themselves the "wheat" or the "sons of the kingdom" (i.e., Israel) discovered that they were actually weeds or "sons of the evil one" growing in fields of the world.⁸³ The identity of "sons of the kingdom" is different in Matthew's Centurion narrative

⁸⁰ Kingsbury writes, "The elemental message of the Interpretation is easily recognizable. It focuses on the 'harvest', defined as the 'end of the age' (v. 39b), and what is to take place at this time . . . The key concept is the 'End of the Age', a formula found in no other Gospel than the first. It denotes the termination of the existing world order when present history has run its course (24.4; 28.20), after which there will be a transformation of all things, and God will reign supreme (13.43; 25:34, 41; 26.29). The immediate arrival of the End of the Age will be signaled by the return of Jesus Son of Man and the beginning of the Last Judgment centring on the Great Assize." Kingsbury, *The Parables*, 106-107.

⁸¹ Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 393.

⁸² Young, *The Parables*, 285-286, translates the rabbinic parable, "The Argument of the Wheat and the Tares," from the *Agad Bershit* 23: "The tares said to the wheat, 'We are more (as) beautiful than (as) you are. The rain falls for us and for you; and the sun shines on both of us.' The wheat says to the tares, 'It is not important what you say, nor is it important what we say but rather the winnowing fan because it comes and separates us for the storehouse, and you for the birds to eat.' Thus the nations of the world and Israel are mixed together in this world."

⁸³ John Nolland points out an interesting fact about the *aorist participle* σπείρας ("the enemy who **sows** them is the devil.") in vs. 39: "There may be significance in the choice of an aorist verb for the devil's sowing and a present for the Son of Man's sowing. The difference would fit with an interest in unresponsiveness to the ministry of

(8:5-13). In this narrative the “sons of the Kingdom” in 8:12 are equated with unbelieving Israel while in 13:38 the “sons of the Kingdom” equal the “good seed” planted in the fields of the world.⁸⁴ In contrast the “Sons of the Evil One” in 13:38 are parallel to the “Sons of the Kingdom” in 8:12 who lose their place in the eschatological feast to those coming from the East and West.⁸⁵ Despite the different terminology, the conclusion of the Centurion narrative (8:10-12) is exactly parallel to interpretation of the Weeds and Wheat. In both unbelievers in Israel will be thrown outside “where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (compare 8:12 and 13:42).⁸⁶ Thus, Matthew has inverted conventional usage, equating some in Israel with the “bad seed” and “sons of the Evil One.”⁸⁷ Based on such unconventional usage, it is not a stretch to suppose that in Matthew’s perspective Gentiles, whom many in Israel traditionally considered

Jesus being explained in terms of many in Israel being the devil’s sowing rather than God’s.” John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 559.

⁸⁴ In fact, Davies and Allison reject any such equivalence, arguing that the “sons of the Kingdom” in Matt 8:12 represent Jewish people who reject Jesus and his message while the same term in 13:38 refers to those who belong to the Kingdom. Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew VIII-XVIII*, 428.

⁸⁵ Harrington, *Matthew*, 206.

⁸⁶ Interestingly, the Matthean Jesus concludes that at the eschatological feast, many in Israel would be thrown out while the Gentile pilgrims from the east and west would be admitted. See Matt 8:12: “But the subjects [literally: sons] of the kingdom [οἱ υἱοὶ τῆς βασιλείας] will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

⁸⁷ As we have noted several times, Mattias Konrad provides counterpoint to the assertion that the “Sons of the Kingdom” in 8:12 and 13:38 envisages the exclusion of some in Israel and the inclusion of Gentiles. Konrad instead argues, along the same lines of Allison, Jr., “Who Will Come from the East and the West?,” 169, that the “Sons of the Kingdom” in Matt 8:13 originally referred to the returning Jewish diaspora. Konrad states, “The distinction in Q 13.28-29 therefore reads as an intra-Jewish contrast: the exclusion from salvation of Palestinian Jews, for whom the personal encounter with Jesus (Luke 13.26) was fruitless, is contrasted with the eschatological salvation of Diaspora Jews. Only in relocating the verses and in placing them in the context of the centurion pericope has Matthew broken up the purely intra-Jewish orientation of the contrast found in Q; however, the connection of vv. 11-12 with v. 10, where Jesus attests to having found in the centurion a faith such as he has not encountered in *Israel*, does not in any way imply that Matthew replaces the intra-Jewish distinction drawn in Q 13.28-29 with a distinction between Gentiles and Jews.” Konrad, *Israel*, 205. Konrad is correct that Matthew’s reference to “Sons of the Kingdom” in 8:12 and 13:38 does not exclude all Jews, but rather only those who have rejected Jesus and his message. However, Konrad mistakenly denies that Gentiles form an essential part of the distinction between the “excluded” and “included” in 8:12 and 13:38. The “included” consist of the faithful of Israel and the Gentiles who respond to the message of the Christian community whereas the “excluded” are disbelieving Jews only. Matt underscores this point via Jesus’ solemn declaration about the centurion (8:10: ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, παρ’ οὐδενὶ τοσαύτην πίστιν ἐν τῷ Ἰσραὴλ εὑρον) and references to Gentiles in the parable of the Mustard Seed (13:32: “the birds of the air come and perch in its branches”). Thus the distinction is between the unbelievers of Israel and the true Israel, made up of Jews and Gentiles.

“bad seed” or “weeds,” could become “good seed” or “sons of the Kingdom.”⁸⁸ Thus, by reversing the conventional terminology, Mathew clearly leaves the possibility open that the designation “Sons of the Kingdom” could in fact include Gentiles who hear and respond to the early Christian community’s message scattered in the fields of the κόσμος.⁸⁹

The significance of the term κόσμος itself underscores the unconventionality of Matthew’s message in the interpretation of the parable of the Wheat and Weeds. Two options confront the reader with regard to the phrase ὁ δὲ ἄγρός ἐστὶν ὁ κόσμος (“the field is the world”) in v. 38. Either it is simply a truism which could be deleted without any change in meaning or it has universalistic significance (i.e., as a reference to the entire world inhabited by both Jews and Gentiles). An analysis of Matthean usage shows that κόσμος can either refer to a space inhabited by Gentiles or essentially function as a synonym for “earth.”⁹⁰ We propose that Matthew does not use κόσμος in a conventional or prosaic sense, but in an unconventional way to refer to a space (broader than Israel) which sheltered Gentiles (as well as the faithful of Israel). Several pieces of evidence support this claim.

First, there are no accidental equivalencies in Matthew’s compendium of allegorical terms (13:37-39). Thus ὁ δὲ ἄγρός ἐστὶν ὁ κόσμος cannot be a truism, but must have allegorical significance for the interpretation of the parable of the Weeds and Wheat. Matthew’s compendium of terms is selective and does not identify the allegorical identity of all the terms in

⁸⁸ John Nolland argues that there is a definitive link between 13:38 and 8:12: “That the link with 8:12 is deliberate is confirmed by the use in 13:42 of ‘There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth’ from the same verse.” See Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 559.

⁸⁹ Luz writes, “Here it is left open who will be ‘sons of the kingdom’; the entire Gospel of Matthew tells how, instead of Israelites, the ‘Gentiles’ who bear fruit (cf. 21:43) will become the ‘sons of the kingdom.’” Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 268. To Luz’s comment, we could add John the Baptist’s warning to the Pharisees and Sadducees in Matt 3:9 that God could raise up children (in this case τέκνα instead of υἱοὶ used in 13:38) for Abraham from the stones if Abraham’s genetic descendants do not “produce fruit in keeping with repentance.”

⁹⁰ In addition to 13:38, Matt uses κόσμος in the following texts: 4:8; 5:14; 13:35; 16:26; 18:7; 24:21; 25:34; and 26:13. Of these, two texts refer to Gentiles (4:8 and 26:13) and six have a more prosaic meaning (5:14; 13:35; 16:26; 18:7; 24:21; and 25:34).

the parable (e.g., the servants, the sleeping, the barn, etc.). Also, the vocabulary of the compendium is clearly of Matthean origin (συντέλεια αἰῶνος or ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων, etc.).⁹¹ Since Matthew is selective in his choice of terms for the compendium and since his explanation of those terms shows that he is not drawing on other sources,⁹² the conclusion is unavoidable: ὁ δὲ ἀγρός ἐστὶν ὁ κόσμος is a deliberately chosen and significant phrase of Matthean origin. Thus, we can deduce that Matthew has the broader, universalistic sense of κόσμος in mind. Κόσμος is thus a reference to Gentile inclusion.⁹³

In addition to the terminological argument, we maintain that from the point of internal theological consistency, interpreting κόσμος in a universalistic manner simply makes more sense in the Matthean context. Nolland argues, “The field is the world and not simply Israel because, no matter how important Israel is to God’s purposes, as the Lord of creation he acts on a worldwide canvas.”⁹⁴ Hagner, like Davies and Allison,⁹⁵ recognizes the parable’s interpretation speaks more broadly to the phenomenon of unbelief everywhere the Gospel would be preached instead of simply in the small circles of the established Jewish-Christian community. Hagner writes, “The field, as explicitly identified as ὁ κόσμος, ‘the world,’ cannot have been understood as the Church by the evangelist or his readers. This identification of the field as the world does,

⁹¹ Luz, *Matthew* 8-20, 267-268.

⁹² See Hendrickx, *The Parables of Jesus*, 67: “There cannot be any doubt, therefore, that in Mt 13:40-43 the Matthean interpretation of the parable is given . . . In Mt 13:40 the evangelist clearly announces what is going to be the focus of his attention. The first half of the verse refers back to the parable, the second half indicates the subject about which he wants to talk [i.e., the end of the age].”

⁹³ In fact, probably the best Matthean parallel to the “the field is the world” is the conclusion of the narrative of Jesus’ anointing at Bethany in 26:13 (cf. Mark 14:9): “Truly I tell you, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world [ἐν ὅλῳ τῷ κόσμῳ].” Kingsbury finds a parallel in Matt 24:30 (“and all the nations of the earth will mourn [πᾶσαι αἱ φυλαὶ τῆς γῆς]”): “In reality, it is only by construing κόσμος at once at the Kingdom of the Son of Man and in universal dimensions that we will arrive at a satisfactory understanding of this term. Such a passage as 24.30 defines it well: ‘all the tribes of the earth’. Accordingly, the ‘world’ is the Kingdom of the Son of Man, a Kingdom that, to use Vögtle’s words, is ‘the globe as mankind’s place of residence.’” Kingsbury, *The Parables*, 97.

⁹⁴ Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 559.

⁹⁵ Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew VIII-XVIII*, 427-428.

however, point in itself to the worldwide mission of the Church in the spread of the gospel (cf. 24:14; 28:19.)”⁹⁶ Ulrich Luz claims a universalistic significance for κόσμος since the Matthean Jesus has universalistic goals:

In Matthew the Son of Man is the Lord of judgment who accompanies the church on its entire way through lowliness, suffering, and resurrection. The field is the world. In 5:14 the disciples were the light of the world. Jesus announces here a universal claim for his message. Thus the field is not the church. This idea is impossible for Matthew not only from a literary point of view, since at this point in his story of Jesus, where the disciples are not yet definitively constituted as a special ‘community,’ there is as yet no church. It is above all impossible also in substance, because for him who concludes his gospel with the great commission, church always exists only in its mission to the world.⁹⁷

Thus, when read through the lens of Matthean theology and logic, interpreting κόσμος in a universalistic sense in the interpretation of the parable of the Weeds and Wheat simply makes more sense. Matthew’s reference to ὁ κόσμος implies Gentile inclusion.

E. The Message of the Parable of the Weeds and the Wheat and Its Connection with the Delay of the *Parousia* and Gentile Inclusion

In our discussion of the parable of the Weeds and Wheat, we have argued that the motif of slow and steady growth until the harvest makes this parable an obvious and fruitful place to search for the theme of the delay of the *Parousia*.⁹⁸ However, as we analyzed the parable, it became clear that the growth of the Kingdom Matthew envisioned was not limited only to Israel, the traditional covenant people of God. In the context of Matt 13, such growth would include Gentiles in addition to the faithful within Israel. While acknowledging that Gentile inclusion is not the *primary* focus of the parable and its interpretation, it is nonetheless important. As

⁹⁶ Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 393.

⁹⁷ Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 268.

⁹⁸ In his essay on the parables of growth, Dahl argues that the image of growth presupposes the passage of a substantial though meaningful period of time in which God prepares for the coming of the final eschatological consummation. See N. A. Dahl, “The Parables of Growth,” in *Jesus in the Memory of the Early Church* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1976), 164: “The parables of growth presume that as the harvest cannot begin until the grain is ripe, so the eschatological consummation cannot come until the day which is ordained by God.”

Eckhard Schnabel writes, “In his interpretation of the parable of the tares, Jesus identifies the world as the locus of the kingdom of God. The brief statement ‘the field is the world’ assumes a mission beyond Israel.”⁹⁹ As can be said for much of Matthew’s eschatological teaching, the connection between of the delay and Gentile inclusion in the parable of the Weeds and the Wheat is *parenetic*. The interim period is not to be used for activities better left for the Son of Man’s *Parousia* like judgment and separation; rather, it is to be used for planting the seeds of the Christian community’s message in soil of the κόσμος where both Jews and Gentiles can hear and respond.¹⁰⁰

III. The Parable of the Mustard Seed (Mark 4:30-32//Luke 13:18-19//Matt 13:31-32//Gos. Thom. 20)

Like the Weeds and the Wheat, the parable¹⁰¹ of the Mustard Seed is “a parable of growth” which envisions a significant passage of time before the eschatological consummation. While some interpreters would identify the contrast between the tiny mustard seed and the large mustard plant as the focus of the parable,¹⁰² others argue the underlying tradition most likely had as its primary object the growth of a tiny seed into a large shrub (or in Matthew and Luke, a

⁹⁹ Schnabel, “Jesus and the Beginnings of the Mission,” 55.

¹⁰⁰ Kingsbury, *Parables*, 76.

¹⁰¹ Some scholars would argue, “Since the parable illustrates the kingdom from something typical in a timeless way and lacks a narrative set in past time, it can be classified as a similitude.” Arland Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus: A Commentary* (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 2000), 394. However, the difference between parable and similitude is merely academic and does not affect our understanding of the text.

¹⁰² Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew VIII-XVIII*, 415, argue “This is a parable of contrast. It illustrates, by reference to the growth of a mustard seed, a vital truth about God’s kingdom: a humble beginning and secret presence are not inconsistent with a great and glorious destiny. It is important to grasp that the focus is neither on the smallness or insignificance of a present circumstance nor on the greatness of God’s future. (On both points instruction was unnecessary.) Rather, the emphasis for Matt falls upon the juxtaposition of two seemingly incongruent facts, one being the experience of Jesus and his followers in the present (cf. the mustard seed), the other being their expectations of the future (cf. the tree in which the birds of heaven nest).” See also Cranfield, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark*, 169-170, who writes, “This is another parable of contrast. This contrast is not, as is sometimes thought, between the Church’s insignificant beginnings and the widely-spread powerful organization it was to become: it is rather between the present veiledness of the kingdom of God and its future glorious manifestation in the Parousia.”

“tree”) which gives shelter to the birds of the air.¹⁰³ As a triple-tradition parable present also in the *Gos. Thom.*, the interrelationships between the different expressions of the parable are complex and controversial. The result is that there is little agreement as to whether the core image is *growth* or *contrast*. For our purposes the distinction is inconsequential since implicit in the contrast between tiny seed and large shrub is the process of growth (and indeed, implicit in growth is the tiny beginning and large consummation).¹⁰⁴ In whatever case, we are interested in the motif of growth, which is critical to the parable of the Mustard Seed.¹⁰⁵ As we have argued, growth is eschatologically significant:

There is a fixed plan and order for the eschatological series of events, which can be illustrated by the process of growth. But what happens is not due to a historic development following an immanent necessity, but to the creative activity of God, who, according to his own plan, leads history towards its goal. God sends his kingdom and the Messiah on the day he alone has fixed and which he alone knows . . . The pictures taken from organic growth illustrate the divine predetermination and eschatological necessity of what is happening.¹⁰⁶

Since the process of growth required a long passage of time, it signified the delay for an early Christian community that hoped for a short interim period before the *Parousia*. We will also see

¹⁰³ Other commentators argue that Matt and Mark’s reference to “the smallest of all seeds” (Matt: ὁ μικρότερον μὲν ἐστὶν πάντων τῶν σπερμάτων and Mark: μικρότερον ὃν πάντων τῶν σπερμάτων τῶν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς) is probably secondary and that the most original form of the parable is Luke’s version where no reference to the smallness of the seed appears. For example, C. H. Dodd writes, “The emphasis on the smallness of the seed is in Mark alone, and is probably intrusive. If we neglect it, then the main point of the parable is not the contrast between small beginnings and great results. In both forms the prevailing idea is that of growth up to a point at which the tree can shelter the birds.” Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom*, 190-191. See also Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, 1016: “In the parable of the mustard seed Jesus shows how from a small beginning, the kingdom of God grows inevitably into a great phenomenon in human history. His own preaching of the kingdom will have an inevitable result in its fully realized form. In the Lucan formulation, which makes no mention of the size of the seed—for what reason this is not picked up one can only speculate—the parable is not per se one of contrast, but of growth.”

¹⁰⁴ For example, Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus*, 123, argues that both contrast and growth are equally important in the parable.

¹⁰⁵ Young, *Parables*, 210.

¹⁰⁶ Dahl, “The Parables of Growth,” 153.

the companion motif of Gentile inclusion in the image of the “eschatological tree” giving shelter for the birds of the air (Mark 4:32//Luke 13:19//Matt 13:32//*Gos. Thom.* 20).

However, as in our analysis of the parable of the Weeds and the Wheat, first we will consider several other issues in the parable as they relate to delay and Gentile inclusion: (1) the relationship between the four attestations of the parable; (2) their literary context in the Synoptic Gospels and *Gos. Thom.*; and (3) several interpretational problems that bear on our analysis. Afterwards, we will demonstrate the presence and significance of both (4) Gentile inclusion and the (5) delay of the *Parousia* in the parable.

Figure 1: A Synopsis of the Parable of the Mustard Seed in Matthew, Mark, Luke and <i>Gos. Thom.</i>							
vs	Matt 13:31-32	vs	Mark 4:30-32	vs	Luke 13:18-19	vs	<i>Gos. Thom.</i> 20 ¹⁰⁷
						A	The disciples said to Jesus,
						B	‘Tell us...
						C	What the kingdom of heaven is <u>like</u> ?’
						D	He said to them,
31 a	Ἄλλην παραβολὴν παρέθηκεν αὐτοῖς λέγων·	30 a	Καὶ ἔλεγεν	18 a	Ἔλεγεν οὖν·		
31 b	<u>ὁμοία</u> ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν	30 b-	πῶς ὁμοιώσωμεν τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ	18 b-	τίνι <u>ὁμοία</u> ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ	E	‘It is <u>like</u>
		c	ἢ ἐν τίνι αὐτὴν παραβολῇ θῶμεν;		καὶ τίνι ὁμοιώσω αὐτήν;		(see clause c)
	κόκκῳ σινάπεως,	31 a	ὡς κόκκῳ σινάπεως	19 a	<u>ὁμοία</u> ἐστὶν κόκκῳ σινάπεως,		a mustard seed
31 c	ὃν λαβὼν ἄνθρωπος	31 b	ὃς ὅταν σπαρῇ ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς,	19 b	ὃν λαβὼν ἄνθρωπος		(see clause g)
	<u>ἔσπειρεν</u> ἐν τῷ				ἔβαλεν εἰς κῆπον		

¹⁰⁷ Lambdin translation from James Robinson ed., *The Coptic Gnostic Library, A Complete Edition of the Nag Hammadi Codices* (5 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 2.52-95.

	ἀγρῷ αὐτοῦ·		ἐαυτοῦ,		
32 a	ὁ μικρότερον μέν ἐστίν <u>πάντων τῶν</u> <u>σπερμάτων</u> ,	31 c	μικρότερον ὃν <u>πάντων τῶν</u> <u>σπερμάτων</u> τῶν ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς,		F It is the smallest of <u>all seeds</u> .
		32 a	καὶ ὅταν σπαρῇ,		G But when it falls on tilled soil,
32 b	ὅταν δὲ αὐξηθῇ <u>μεῖζον</u> τῶν λαχάνων ἐστίν	32 b	καὶ γίνεται <u>μεῖζον</u> <u>πάντων</u> τῶν λαχάνων	19 c καὶ ἠϋξήσεν	H it produces a <u>great</u> plant
32 c	καὶ γίνεται δένδρον ,	32 c	καὶ ποιεῖ κλάδους μεγάλους,	19 d καὶ ἐγένετο εἰς δένδρον ,	
32 d-e	ὥστε ἐλθεῖν τὰ πετεινὰ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ <u>κατασκηνοῦν</u> ἐν τοῖς κλάδοις αὐτοῦ.	32 d	ὥστε δύνασθαι ὑπὸ τὴν σκιάν αὐτοῦ τὰ πετεινὰ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ <u>κατασκηνοῦν</u> .	19 e καὶ τὰ πετεινὰ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ <u>κατεσκήνωσεν ἐν</u> <u>τοῖς κλάδοις</u> <u>αὐτοῦ</u> .	I and becomes a <u>shelter</u> for the birds of the sky.’

A. The Relationship between the Different Occurrences of the Parable of the Mustard Seed as They Appear in the Synoptic Gospels and *Gospel of Thomas*

The relationship between the different occurrences of the parable of the Mustard Seed in the Synoptic Gospels is thorny, though there are some broad points of agreement among commentators.¹⁰⁸ Our interest in the relationships between the different expressions of the parable (i.e., the redaction) stems not from any curiosity about the original form as spoken by Jesus, but rather to see how the individual Gospels have altered the parable with regard to the themes of delay and Gentile inclusion.

There is broad agreement that the simple Lukan version, based on Q,¹⁰⁹ better represents the earlier traditions than either Matthew or Mark.¹¹⁰ In the Lukan version commentators only view

¹⁰⁸ J. D. Crossan, “The Seed Parables of Jesus,” *JBL* 92.2 (1973), 253.

¹⁰⁹ Kloppenborg, *Q Parallels*, 150, notes that most authors acknowledge that the parable of the Mustard Seed existed in Q. Based on our above synopsis (Figure 1), we can suggest the following pieces of evidence that

the reference εἰς κῆπον ἑαυτοῦ (“in his garden”) as secondary, suggesting it was Luke’s concession to the Gentile custom of planting mustard in the garden (instead of the alleged Jewish custom of planting in the field).¹¹¹ The absence of the phrase “smallest of the seeds” in Luke (present Mark, Matt, and *Gos. Thom.*) confirms that the Lukan version is the simplest and likely most original.¹¹² Finally, it is unclear whether the Lukan Jesus’ double introductory question to the parable in v. 18 (“What is the kingdom of God like? What shall I compare it to?”) reflects Luke’s dependence on Mark (who uses a double question in 4:30) or exists in Q.¹¹³ The fact that Luke does not use a double question to balance his introduction to the parable/simile of the Leaven suggests that v. 18 may be original. It is possible that Luke found his introductory phrase in Q.

In contrast, Mark enhances the original logion he found in his tradition by adding the following: (1) the phrase ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς (“upon the earth”) twice mentioned in v. 31, (2) the unconventional grammar of v. 31 suggesting an insertion, and (3) the prominence of the contrast motif (small seed vs large branch).¹¹⁴ If we remove these Markan enhancements, four points

support the existence of the Mustard Seed parable in Q: (1) Matt and Luke’s use of the phrase ὃν λαβὼν ἄνθρωπος (Matt 13:31c/Luke 13:19b) against Mark; (2) Matt and Luke’s use of the verb αὐξάνω against Mark (vs. 32b//vs. 19c); (3) Matt and Luke’s agreement on the phrase καὶ γίνεται δένδρον (Matt)// καὶ ἐγένετο εἰς δένδρον (Luke) (vs. 32c//vs. 19d) against Mark; and (4) Matt and Luke’s use of ἐν τοῖς κλάδοις αὐτοῦ (vs. 32e//19e) against Mark (who uses the term κλάδος earlier in the parable). These four agreements against Mark must come from a source shared between Matt and Luke but not Mark (i.e., the Q-hypothesis). Thus, the parable of the Mustard Seed existed in Q.

¹¹⁰ Nolland, *Luke*, 727. See also Bernard Scott, *Hear Then a Parable* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 373.

¹¹¹ Scott, *Hear Then*, 375, argues this point (cf. Manson, *Sayings*, 123). Brad Young rejects the postulation that mustard could not be planted in the garden according to Jewish law. See Young, *The Parables*, 207.

¹¹² Robinson, *et al.*, eds., *The Critical Edition of Q*, 402, omit the phrase “smallest of the seeds” from Q.

¹¹³ Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 560-561.

¹¹⁴ Crossan, “The Seed Parables of Jesus,” 254-259. Hultgren, *Parables*, 397, concludes, “In light of the syntactical awkwardness and redundancy of 4:31-32, it is evident that considerable redaction has been supplied by the evangelist, who sought to highlight the contrast between small beginnings and huge endings by adding to his material, but did so in rather cumbersome ways.”

remain: “the initial sowing, the growth, the final size, and the shade for the birds.”¹¹⁵ Thus, for Mark, the most original tradition contains the image of the “eschatological tree” and birds. As we will see below, the “eschatological tree” and birds refer to Gentile inclusion. Also, the image of growth from a mustard seed to a large shrub is an essential part of the pre-Markan tradition. Interestingly, this analysis of the motif of growth suggests that references to Gentile inclusion existed from a very early stage in the Gospel traditions themselves.¹¹⁶

The Matthean version of the parable of the Mustard Seed suggests a conflation of Q¹¹⁷ with Mark, especially in v. 32 where the Markan language of contrast (smallest vs. largest) appears along with an elaboration of the mustard plant’s unusual size (“it is the largest of the garden plants and becomes a tree”).¹¹⁸ Another secondary characteristic in the Matthean parable is the appearance of the phrase ἐν τῷ ἀγρῷ αὐτοῦ (“in his field”), which foreshadows the “field/world” equivalence in Jesus’ interpretation of the parable of the Weeds and Wheat (13:37).¹¹⁹ Matthew’s use of “field” (instead of garden [Luke], earth [Mark], or tilled soil [*Gos. Thom.*]) is significant since we have argued above in the parable of the Weeds and Wheat (which bracket Matthew’s Mustard Seed parable) that the term alludes to Gentile inclusion.¹²⁰ Thus, it would seem that,

¹¹⁵ Crossan, “The Seed Parables of Jesus,” 259.

¹¹⁶ Grässer, *Das Problem der Parusieverzögerung*, 141-142.

¹¹⁷ Robinson, *et al.*, eds., *The Critical Edition of Q*, 400-401.

¹¹⁸ Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 258.

¹¹⁹ Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 261. See also Kingsbury, *The Parables*, 80, “Still, the possibility is strong that Matthew employs this phrase, not so much to display a superior knowledge of agricultural practice, but to assimilate the parable of the Mustard Seed to the parable of the Tares.”

¹²⁰ Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 385, and Kingsbury, *Parables*, 80, argue that “field” provides verbal continuity with the rest of chapter 13 including the parable of the Weeds and the Wheat. Manson, *Sayings*, 123, claims that Matthew’s use “field” harmonizes with the Jewish custom of not planting mustard in the garden.

outside of the “eschatological tree” with its birds (v. 32), Matthew has another hint of Gentile inclusion.¹²¹

While the *Thomassine* version (logion 20) of the Mustard Seed parable is indeed shorter than Matthew or Mark, it also evidences redaction. First, *Thomas*’ lessening of “Old Testament phraseology” (i.e., of Dan 4; Ezek 17, 31) in connection with the “eschatological tree with birds” image is evidence of *Thomas*’ tendency to eliminate OT references.¹²² Crossan claims that *Thomas*’ “great plant” sheltering the birds (versus Mark’s “*largest of the garden plants*,” Matthew’s “*the largest of the garden plants and becomes a tree*,” and Luke’s “*tree*”) is meant to evoke “the normal world of nature as it is found” (e.g., Ps 104:12) instead of the “eschatological tree” of Ezekiel.¹²³ However, it seems that even in *Thomas*’ more subdued image of the “eschatological tree” and birds, there are still overtones of Ezekiel and Daniel.¹²⁴ Secondly, the *Gos. Thom.* refers to “tilled soil” which is a secondary elaboration and a possible allegorical reference which could very well reframe the eschatological character to one of gnostic enlightenment.¹²⁵ Third, the *Gos. Thom.* betrays Matthean influence by introducing the parable

¹²¹ For example, Scott, *Hear Then*, 376, writes: “Matthew’s ‘in the field,’ probably represents his stereotyped phrase. It occurs twice in the parable of the Wheat and Tares, which immediately precedes A Grain of Mustard Seed, and again in the Treasure. Also in the interpretation of The Wheat and the Tares the disciples ask about the ‘parable of the weeds of the field’ (Matt. 13:36), and Jesus responds that ‘the field is the world.’”

¹²² Gathercole, *The Gospel of Thomas*, 299, notes that “*Thomas* is consistently more distant from the OT in its parables.” Hendrickx, *The Parables of Jesus*, 32, writes: “The fact that this version of the parable has the least evidence of Old Testament phraseology (see below) does not necessarily mean that it is the most primitive, since the *Gospel of Thomas* has also eliminated practically all references to the Old Testament from the parables of the seed growing secretly and the wicked tenants. Unlike the general tendency in the tradition to increase Old Testament references, the *Gospel of Thomas* seems to have moved in the opposite direction.”

¹²³ Crossan, “The Seed Parables,” 258.

¹²⁴ Jeremias, *Parables*, 31.

¹²⁵ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, 1016, and Gathercole, *The Gospel of Thomas*, 298. Similarly, Hultgren writes, “The *Thomas* version has gnosticizing elements in at least two respects. The mustard seed represents the spark of light, the enlightenment that comes to the Gnostic, and the tilled ground refers to the readiness of the Gnostic to receive it. That means that the parable has been transformed from a parable of the kingdom as an outward, eschatological reality to one in which the kingdom is thought of as an inner, spiritual reality that is available to the individual Gnostic.” Hultgren, *Parables*, 395.

with an appeal to the “Kingdom of Heaven.”¹²⁶ Though outwardly similar to the Synoptics, *Thomas’* modifications to the parable of the Mustard Seed introduce some significant deviations from the more original eschatologically-focused traditions found in the Synoptics.

In our short discussion of the relationship between the four expressions of the Mustard Seed parable, we have seen that Luke best represents Q¹²⁷ and is indeed the closest to the original tradition. Though Mark’s version contains the same basic elements as Q (e.g, the sowing, the growth, the final size, and the shade for the birds),¹²⁸ he has expanded and elaborated on his source(s) to draw attention to the contrast between the small mustard seed that grows into a large mature shrub. Matthew has combined both Mark and Q, adding references to emphasize the contrast and to connect to the “field” allegory developed in the parable of the Weeds and the Wheat. By reducing the OT allusions and adding the image of the *tilled* earth, the *Gos. Thom.* has altered the eschatological character of the parable. While we have not exhaustively described all the editorial changes within the different expressions of the Mustard Seed parable, we have developed a foundation for our analysis of the delay of the *Parousia* and Gentile inclusion which we will elaborate below.

B. The Parable of Mustard Seed in Its Context

The context of the Lukan and Matthean attestations of the parable of the Mustard Seed are significant for our study of the connection between the delay of the *Parousia* and Gentile inclusion. First we will consider the Matthean context.

¹²⁶ Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew VIII-XVIII*, 421.

¹²⁷ See footnote 104 for an argument for the existence of the Mustard Seed parable in Q.

¹²⁸ Crossan, *The Seed Parables of Jesus*, 259.

Framed by Matthew's parable of the Weeds and the Wheat (and its interpretation), the parable of the Mustard Seed (and its companion parable, the Leaven), are the central elements in an inclusio:¹²⁹

Figure 2: The Structure of Matt 13:24-43	
(13:24-30)	The Parable of the Weeds and the Wheat introduced by Ἄλλην παραβολὴν παρέθηκεν αὐτοῖς . . .
(13:31-32)	The Parable of the Mustard Seed introduced by Ἄλλην παραβολὴν παρέθηκεν αὐτοῖς . . .
(13:33)	The Parable of the Leaven introduced by Ἄλλην παραβολὴν ἐλάλησεν αὐτοῖς...
(13:34-35)	Comment on the Hidden Nature of the Parables
(13:36-43)	The Interpretation of the Parable of the Weeds and Wheat introduced by διασάφησον ἡμῖν τὴν παραβολὴν τῶν ζιζανίων τοῦ ἀγροῦ . . .

What can we infer from Matthew's chiastic structure and his triple repetition of the introduction Ἄλλην παραβολὴν παρέθηκεν [or ἐλάλησεν in 13:33] αὐτοῖς? The repetition suggests the parable of the Weeds and the Wheat shares a common theme with the parables of 13:31-33 (Mustard Seed and Leaven) and Matthew's comment on the hidden nature of the parables in vv. 34-35. For this reason, Hendrickx writes: "In the Matthean context the key to the specifically Matthean meaning of the parable of the mustard seed is also to be found in the interpretation of the parable of the weeds."¹³⁰ While there is no one-to-one correspondence between all the elements of the parables in the inclusio, we can at minimum conclude the following: the sower of the Mustard Seed is the Son of Man; the mustard "tree" is the Kingdom of the Son of Man; and the birds are the "Sons of the Kingdom."¹³¹ Additionally, we have already noted the correspondence between

¹²⁹ See Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew VIII-XVIII*, 371, who argue that the above is one of three inclusions in Matt 13.

¹³⁰ Hendrickx, *The Parables of Jesus*, 43.

¹³¹ Hendrickx, *The Parables of Jesus*, 43. See also Hultgren, *Parables*, 399.

the field where the mustard seed was planted and the field (=the world) where the weeds and wheat were planted and harvested.¹³²

In addition to the immediate context, the broader context of Matt 13 also has bearing on the parable of the Mustard Seed. In Matt 13, the parables/interpretations of the Sower/Soils and the Weeds and Wheat (in which the parable of the Mustard Seed is the central literary unit) “address the same problem of evil, which is the failure of the gospel to win the hearts of all . . . The first two parables in Matthew 13 help explain unbelief in Jesus and the dilemma of a rejected Messiah.”¹³³ In this respect, the contrast between the small mustard seed and the mature mustard “tree” has an apologetic concern as well. Though rejected by many in Israel (e.g., 13:11-15 and 34-35), the tiny seed of the Kingdom will grow into a majestic “tree” where the birds of the heavens (which, as we will see shortly, is metaphor for Gentiles) will shelter.¹³⁴ In this way, both the immediate and broader context of the parable of the Mustard Seed point towards Gentile inclusion.

There are indications in the context of Luke’s Mustard Seed parable (13:18-19) that Gentile inclusion is also a concern. Among the Synoptics, Luke is unique in separating the “Parables of Kingdom” which Matthew (Chapter Thirteen) and Mark (Chapter Four) have put together into discourses.¹³⁵ For this reason, we cannot appeal to the context of a discourse (as we have in Matt 13) for hints about Luke’s intentions for a few constituent parts. Nevertheless, Luke’s placement

¹³² Scott, *Hear Then*, 376.

¹³³ Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew VIII-XVIII*, 408.

¹³⁴ Carter and Heil, *Matthew’s Parables*, 57, write, “The parables remind and reassure the audience of the ultimate, yet future completion of God’s purposes despite its present, apparently modest manifestation and the prevalence of unbelief and opposition (13:24-30, 31-33, 36-43, 47-50).”

¹³⁵ Darell Bock explains, “Luke broke up what was together because he knew that Jesus’ ministry was characterized throughout by parables. Rather than concentrating the parables in a few discourses as do other Synoptics, he distributes the parables throughout Jesus’ ministry in a way that reflects that ministry.” Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1223.

of narratives and parables before and after the parable of the Mustard Seed gives some helpful insights.

In the pericope preceding the Mustard Seed (13:10-17), Jesus healed a crippled “daughter of Abraham” and “humiliated” the synagogue ruler and his associates for opposing his healing on the Sabbath (13:17). Luke makes a strong connection to the concluding assertion in 13:17 by introducing the parable of the Mustard Seed with Ἔλεγεν οὖν (“He [Jesus] said therefore . . .” [NRSV]).¹³⁶ It would seem that themes of the healing power of the Kingdom and the synagogue leadership’s opposition to it carry over from the preceding pericope into the Mustard Seed parable.¹³⁷

The pericope following our parable is the parable of the Shut Door (13:22-13).¹³⁸ We argued extensively in Chapter Three that the parable of the Shut Door, which concludes with Luke’s version of the “East/West Saying” from Q in 13:28-30 (13:29: “People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God”), refers to the exclusion of many in Israel and the inclusion of receptive Gentiles.¹³⁹ That Luke had in mind the exclusion of many in Israel cannot be doubted since following the “East/West saying” Jesus laments over hard-hearted Jerusalem (13:34-35). The lament prefigures Jesus’ gloomy entrance into the city (19:28-40) because of its rejection of him and its consequent approaching judgment (19:41-44). Thus, the pericopes both before and after the Lukan parable of the Mustard

¹³⁶ Hultgren, *Parables*, 401, writes, “The parable follows, introduced by οὖν (‘therefore’), as though it is an immediate addendum to the miracle and the silencing of the opponents.”

¹³⁷ See Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1224-1225. Bock, however, chooses to focus more on the Kingdom’s power as the referent of οὖν.

¹³⁸ This parable is sometimes referred to as the parable of the “Narrow Door.” However, the focus of the Lukan parable is clearly on the soon-to-be-shut door. Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1230-1242, refers to the parable as the “Narrow and Soon-Shut Door.”

¹³⁹ See pages 130-144 of Chapter Three. See also Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, 1023.

Seed show Luke's interest in the themes of exclusion of some in Israel and the inclusion of Gentiles.¹⁴⁰

In summary, the context of the parable of the Mustard Seed in both Matthew and Luke underscores the thematic link with Gentile inclusion. Before proceeding to our analysis of the motifs of delay and Gentile inclusion in the Mustard Seed parable, we must address a thorny problem of interpretation that has a bearing on our argument.

C. Problem of Interpretation: "Eschatological Tree" or Everyday Shrub?

As we consider the delay of the *Parousia* and Gentile inclusion in the parable of the Mustard Seed, the problem of "tree" or "shrub" confronts us. At its core, the issue is this: the mustard seed, which is most likely *sinapsis* or *brassica nigra* (commonly called "black mustard"), does not grow into a "tree" (Matt 13:32/Luke 13:19) or even a "great plant" (*Gos. Thom.* 20) with "big branches" (Mark 4:32). It is, rather, an annual shrub which reaches a maximum height of several meters (though often it only grows a few feet tall).¹⁴¹ It is certainly a stretch to classify the mustard plant with Matthew and Luke as a δένδρον or "tree" of adequate size for birds to nest (κατασκηνόω) upon.¹⁴² If the parable of the Mustard Seed refers to a *brassica nigra* shrub, then a fundamental problem of interpretation confronts us. The most obvious point of contact between the mustard seed/plant and the kingdom of God (mentioned in the parable's introduction as the point of comparison) is the "eschatological tree" image developed in Ezek 17:22-24

¹⁴⁰ Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1231, writes: "The kingdom's coming [in the parables of the Kingdom like the Mustard Seed] has implications for the Jewish nation. The time to join God's eschatological program has come, so one had better respond quickly before the door closes. Jesus stresses the nation's situation in the picture of the narrow and soon-shut door. After this passage, Jesus will issue a lament, because the nation does not respond (13:31-35)."

¹⁴¹ Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 261. See also Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew VIII-XVIII*, 418, 420.

¹⁴² Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 561.

(where the tree is a *cedar*).¹⁴³ Why, then, do the Synoptic Gospels and the *Gos. Thom.* compare the kingdom of God to a humble shrub instead of a larger tree which would remind the reader of Ezekiel's "eschatological tree"? Perhaps, then, there is no eschatological link in the parable of the Mustard Seed and thus no connection to the *Parousia*, the ultimate consummation of the eschatological hopes of the early Christian community.

Despite the admittedly unrealistic image of the mustard "tree," it is exactly the "eschatological tree" of Ezek 17:22-23 that the parable of the Mustard Seed has in mind. In fact, the parable employs irony in its overly dramatic presentation of the mustard plant/tree to draw attention not only to the contrast (i.e., from the small seed comes a large shrub)¹⁴⁴ but also to the connection with the eschatological images in the OT prophetic texts themselves.¹⁴⁵

How would such a hyperbolic comparison function? In Ezek 17:22-24 the Prophet expounds:

This is what the Sovereign LORD says: 'I myself will take a shoot from the very top of a cedar and plant it; I will break off a tender sprig from its topmost shoots and plant it on a high and lofty mountain. On the mountain heights of Israel I will plant it; it will produce branches and bear fruit and become a splendid cedar. Birds of every kind will nest in it; they will find shelter in the shade of its branches. All the trees of the forest will know that I the LORD bring down the tall tree and make the low tree grow tall. I dry up the green tree and make the dry tree flourish.'

It is important to observe the parallelism between the "eschatological tree" of Ezekiel 17 and the mature mustard plant of our parable. As we noted already, the mustard plant is "the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree" (Matthew), "the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches" (Mark), "a great plant" (*Gos. Thom.*) and, finally, a "tree" (Luke). Such a liberal use of

¹⁴³ There are a number of other OT references where trees are compared to kingdoms. See Ps 80:8-13; Ezek 31:1-9; and Dan 4:11-12.

¹⁴⁴ Barclay, *Parables*, 52.

¹⁴⁵ See Hultgren, *The Parables*, 400.

superlatives and comparatives in the descriptions of such an ordinary plant is an indication not only of contrast (between seed and plant) but also of a deeper and more significant allusion to the “eschatological tree” of Dan 4 and Ezek 17.¹⁴⁶ In other words, in the Mustard Seed parable the attentive reader notices that too much is made of an unassuming shrub. Thus, the reader discerns a hyperbole transforming a mustard shrub into the OT “eschatological tree.”

But if the allusion in the parable of the Mustard Seed is indeed to the “eschatological tree,” why then the choice of mustard seed/plant? Perhaps it is the proverbially small nature of mustard seed.¹⁴⁷ But, if the intention was to highlight the ratio between the seed on one hand and the mature plant/tree on the other (i.e., a simple contrast), surely other plant species could have been better employed. For example, though the mustard seed is small (one millimeter in diameter), the mature mustard plant is also quite small when compared to the well-known *cedrus libani* (“Lebanon Cedar”) whose cones are 8-12 cm long while the mature tree is 40 meters tall with a trunk 2.5 meters in diameter! Such a well-known tree would have produced a favorably small ratio between seed and mature plant (approximately 1:4,000 versus 1:1,000 or 2,000 for the mustard plant). Moreover the cedar is a much more appropriate representative of God’s Kingdom as Ezekiel recognized.

The answer to this question brings us back to Ezek 17:22-24 and image of the “eschatological tree.”¹⁴⁸ YHWH declares in 17:24, “All the trees of the forest will know that I

¹⁴⁶ Thus, Robert W. Funk, “The Looking-Glass Tree Is for the Birds, Ezekiel 17:22-24; Mark 4:30-32,” in *Int* 27.1 (1973), 5, writes, “In Mark (4:32) the seed grows into the greatest of all *shrubs*, but in Matthew (13:32) and Luke (13:19) it becomes a *tree*. It is hardly speculation to say that the eschatological tree of Ezekiel and Daniel has influenced the transmission of the parable in the New Testament period.”

¹⁴⁷ Compare Matt 17:20 (“If you have faith as small as a mustard seed”) with Luke 17:6 (“If you have faith as small as a mustard seed”). See also Manson, *Sayings*, 123. Luz, *Matthew 8-10*, 261, claims that *brassica nigra* has a diameter of “little more than one millimeter.”

¹⁴⁸ We are indebted to Funk, “The Looking Glass Tree,” 7-8 and Hendrickx, *Parables*, 36 for drawing our attention to the ironic nature of the Mustard Seed parable in view of Ezekiel 17:22-24.

the LORD bring down the tall tree and make the low tree grow tall.” Thus, the mustard plant image taps into the irony that in YHWH’s eschatological kingdom the large trees are made small and the small trees (such as the mustard plant) become large.¹⁴⁹ From this perspective, the imagery used in the Mustard Seed parable fits very well into the “eschatological tree” motif. In a twist of irony so characteristic of the Gospels, the humble mustard shrub is a better illustration of the Kingdom of God than a regal cedar of Lebanon. In conclusion, the problem posed by the ironic presentation of the mustard “tree” is really no problem at all. The mustard “tree” in the parable appeals to the “eschatological tree” of Ezek 17 and therefore, in the context of the early Christian community, refers to the eschatological consummation anticipated in Christ’s *Parousia*.¹⁵⁰

D. Gentile Inclusion in the Parable of the Mustard Seed

We have already hinted at the connection between Gentile inclusion and the parable of the Mustard Seed illustrated by the birds of air (τὰ πετεινὰ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ) perching (κατασκηνύω) in the branches (Matt/Luke: ἐν τοῖς κλάδοις αὐτοῦ) of the mustard plant (=eschatological tree of Ezekiel 17). Using the image of the birds flocking to nest in the mustard “tree,” the Gospel writers appeal to the “eschatological pilgrimage”¹⁵¹ of the Gentile nations. We will take a look at the two constituent parts of this picture of Gentile inclusion in the parable of the Mustard Seed: the birds of the air themselves and the act of perching (or nesting).

¹⁴⁹ Blomberg, *Parables*, 284-85, states: “The lowly mustard plant, even though it can occasionally reach heights of ten to twelve feet and be legitimately considered a small shade tree, pales in comparison with the lofty cedar. Nevertheless, there may be deliberate irony in the choice of imagery.”

¹⁵⁰ Crossan explains the ironic image in the terms of historical criticism: “The version from which the pre-Markan and Q versions developed moved the parable towards eschatological imagery, and did not find the process particularly easy: having started with a *mustard* seed there would always be trouble in having its final growth as a convincing image of the eschaton. This version made the basic change of terminating the parable with a description more redolent of OT historico-eschatological imagery.” Crossan, “The Seed Parables,” 259.

¹⁵¹ See pages 84-85 and 103-106 of Chapter Two.

Though not all acknowledge the connection between the birds of the air and Gentile inclusion,¹⁵² on the whole there is good evidence for this association.¹⁵³ While the parable of the Mustard Seed does not cite them word-for-word, the sources for the image of the birds of the air sheltering in the tree are Dan 4:12 and 21 (*Theodotion* version = 4:9,18 in the English versions),¹⁵⁴ Ezek 17:23 and 31:6.¹⁵⁵ In both Daniel and Ezekiel, the birds represent the nations flocking to the protection of a king or kingdom symbolized by the tree.¹⁵⁶ However, Dan 4:12, 21 (*Theodotion*) and Ezek 31:6 are negative in character, referring to judgment of Babylon and Egypt for their hubris. In contrast, Ezek 17:23 (quoted above) is positive. It is a clear reference to a renewed Israel to whom the Gentile nations journey to pledge allegiance to YHWH.¹⁵⁷ Blomberg asserts, “In the parable of the mustard seed, all three accounts conclude with an allusion to Ezekiel 17:23 and related OT passages (esp. Ezek 31:6; Dan 4:12 [*Theodotion*]; Ps 104:12), in which the birds of the air come to nest in the branches of the mighty cedar of Lebanon. In that context the birds stand for all the peoples of the earth, that is, predominantly the Gentiles.”¹⁵⁸ The language and images employed in the Mustard Seed parable and Ezek 17:23 draw the reader’s attention to the eschatological pilgrimage, an end-of-time event when the Gentiles would come flocking to Israel to render homage to YHWH.

¹⁵² See Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 1017 and Young, *Parables*, 206-207.

¹⁵³ Manson, *Sayings*, 123.

¹⁵⁴ In contrast the LXX uses the phrase καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ τὰ πετεινὰ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἐνόσσεον in Daniel 4:12 instead of the verb κατασκηνοῶ in the *Theodotion* version.

¹⁵⁵ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 527. See also Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom*, 190-191. There is possibly another source in LXX Ps 103:12 (=104:12).

¹⁵⁶ Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew VIII-XVIII*, 420. Jeremias, *Parables*, 147, writes, “The purpose of the parable is to compare the Kingdom of God with the final stage of the process there described, with the tall shrub affording shelter to the birds . . . The tree which shelters the birds is a common metaphor for a mighty kingdom which protects its vassals.”

¹⁵⁷ Compare with Isa 2:2-3, “In the last days, the mountain of the Lord’s temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted about the hills, and all the nations will stream to it. Many peoples will come and say, ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the temple of the God of Jacob.’”

¹⁵⁸ Blomberg, *Parables*, 284-285.

Despite the compelling symbolism and clear connections between Ezek 17:23 and the Mustard Seed parable, there is one objection. The Greek text of Dan 4:12, 21 (*Theodotion*) much more closely resembles that of the Synoptic Gospel's description of the birds alighting upon the tree than does Ezek 17:23.¹⁵⁹ As we mentioned above, despite the close verbal similarities with Dan 4:12, 21 (*Theodotion*) and the literary connections with Ezek 17:23, there is no one-to-one citation of these texts in any of the attestations of the Mustard Seed parable.¹⁶⁰ For our purposes, we need not be troubled by this objection. We have produced ample evidence that the “birds of the air” refer to Gentiles (i.e., the nations). Let us now turn our attention to the verb κατασκηνόω which is also significant for our argument.

In addition to the phrase “birds of the air,” the verb κατασκηνόω¹⁶¹ (“perching” or “nesting”) with regard to birds on the mustard plant is also a reference to Gentile inclusion. Jeremias made the strong claim, “The eschatological character of the metaphor of the tree or shrub is established by the fact that κατασκηνοῦν (Mark 4:32; Matt 13:32; Luke 13:19) is actually an eschatological technical term for the incorporation of the Gentiles into the people of God.”¹⁶² But is κατασκηνόω really an eschatological term?¹⁶³

¹⁵⁹ Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew VIII-XVIII*, 120, explain, “All three synoptics are drawing upon scriptural phrases, but it is impossible to speak of a citation . . . It seems to us possible that Jesus himself may have alluded in his parable to the eschatological world tree without having any particular Scripture in mind and that the tradition subsequently, with the help of scriptural phrases, expanded his words in two different directions (Mark and Q).” See also Young, *Parables*, 206-207.

¹⁶⁰ Young, *Parables*, 211-212.

¹⁶¹ Matt/Mark use the present active infinitive κατασκηνοῦν (Matt 13:32/Mark 4:32) while Luke uses the aorist active indicative κατεσκήνωσεν (13:19).

¹⁶² Jeremias, *Parables*, 147. Brad Young disputes this claim, “However one might ask why the word κατασκηνοῦν must be considered ‘an eschatological technical term’ when it is used in many contexts without eschatological implications.” Young, *Parables*, 206-207. Jeremias probably states his case too strongly. Κατασκηνόω rather *becomes* an eschatological term in the context of the parable of the Mustard Seed, couched as it is in the center of the parable of the Weeds and Wheat and its interpretation.

¹⁶³ Jeremias offers a much more lengthy defense of this claim in *Jesus' Promise*, 68-69.

If κατασκηνόω did refer to Gentile inclusion at the eschaton as Jeremias states, then it would be reasonable to assume that the bird's interaction with the mustard tree/plant would not be superficial or transitory (i.e., “perching”), but rather significant and long-lasting (i.e., “nesting”). Though a few modern translations render κατασκηνόω as “perching,”¹⁶⁴ most use the more accurate translation of “nesting,” suggesting a more meaningful and longer lasting connection with the mustard tree.¹⁶⁵ W. D. Davies and D. Allison agree that κατασκηνοῦν probably refers not to simply “perching,” but rather to “nesting” or “dwelling” as in Ps 104:12 (LXX 103:12).¹⁶⁶ Interestingly, in the LXX, the term κατασκηνόω often refers to YHWH's dwelling with his people (especially in the Tabernacle).¹⁶⁷ However, the closest parallels to the usage of κατασκηνόω in the Mustard Seed parable are Dan 4:12 and 4:21 (*Theodotion*¹⁶⁸ = 4:9, 18 in the English versions). Dan 4:12 and 21 (*Theodotion*) reverse the image by referring to subjects “sheltering” under the wings of a regent instead of a regent “dwelling” with his subjects.¹⁶⁹ In any case, the character of the “sheltering” or “nesting” of the birds in the parable of the Mustard Seed suggests a long-term relationship with religious significance between a regent and his subjects.¹⁷⁰

Thus we see that the usage of κατασκηνόω is consistent with the “eschatological pilgrimage” metaphor (especially with regard to the connection between the Mustard Seed parable and Ezek

¹⁶⁴ Compare the *NIV*'s “perching,” with most other English translations using “nesting” or “make nests” (e.g., *NRSV*, *ESV*, *NASB*).

¹⁶⁵ Wilhelm Michaelis, “κατασκηνόω,” *TDNT* 7.388, writes: “The influence of Ez. 17:23; 31:6 (→ 388, 34 f.), even more so Da. 4:12 Θ, and especially Da. 4:21 Θ (→ 388, 26 ff.), is plain, and this proves that what is meant is not temporary alighting but settling with a view to staying, to building nests.”

¹⁶⁶ Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew VIII-XVIII*, 420.

¹⁶⁷ Michaelis, *TDNT* 7.388.

¹⁶⁸ Κατασκηνόω is not used in the LXX version of these verses from Daniel.

¹⁶⁹ Young, *Parables*, 211-212.

¹⁷⁰ See Jeremias, *Promise*, 68-69.

17:23 as discussed above) where the nations come and ally themselves to YHWH in the eschaton.¹⁷¹ We could also cite Jeremias’ most prominent piece of evidence—the appearance of κατασκηνόω in *Jos. Asen.* 15, “And your name shall no longer be called Aseneth, but your name shall be City of Refuge, because in you many nations will take refuge with the Lord God, the Most High, and under your wings many peoples trusting in the Lord God will be sheltered [κατασκηνόω].”¹⁷² Since κατασκηνόω is used only one other time in the NT outside of the Mustard Seed parable (Acts 2:26), nothing can be said with certainty about the eschatological significance of term. However, in the context of the Mustard Seed parable and in view of the evidence presented above, an eschatological sense for the term is likely.

In summary, our analysis of the phrase τὰ πετεινὰ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ κατασκηνοῦν (Luke=κατεσκήνωσεν) has shown that both the image of the τὰ πετεινὰ τοῦ οὐρανοῦ (“the birds of heaven”) and the verb κατασκηνόω (“nesting”) allude to Gentile inclusion. Our final task in this chapter is to reflect upon the connection between the delay of the *Parousia* and the parable of the Mustard Seed.

E. The Delay of the *Parousia* and the Parable of the Mustard Seed

There are really two pieces of evidence that the concept of the *Parousia*’s delay is present in the parable of the Mustard Seed: (1) the context of the parable (especially in Matt) and (2) the nature of the metaphor of growth used by the parable. In our discussion of the parable’s context above, we noted that Matt 13 frames the Mustard Seed parable (13:31-32) within the parable of the Weeds and the Wheat (13:24-30) and its interpretation (13:36-43). Within this inclusio, the delay of the *Parousia* is a central element. For this reason, delay, representing the long process

¹⁷¹ Funk, “Looking-Glass Tree,” 3; Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:5*, 1226. See also Hendrickx, *Parables*, 34-35, “The image used here was quite popular in the Bible and in Jewish literature in general. It referred to the protection offered by a king to his subjects.”

¹⁷² Trans. C. Burchard, “Joseph and Aseneth,” in *OTP*, 2.226.

of growth in which a tiny seed becomes a large plant, is an important element in the Mustard Seed parable as well. In addition, it is possible that Mark's preceding parable (the Seed Growing Secretly in 4:26-29) hints at the delay of the *Parousia* due to the seed's long period of growth (e.g., "night and day" in 4:27), though the focus of the parable is on the seed growing *by itself*.¹⁷³ If delay is present in the long period of growth of the scattered seeds of 4:26-29, then delay may be part of the Mustard Seed parable in 4:30-32 as well.

The second piece of evidence for the presence of the delay of the *Parousia* is in the very nature of the image of growth which is essential to the Kingdom parables of Mark 4 and Matt 13. We argued in Chapter One that in general the early Christian movement recognized that an indefinite interim period between Easter and the *Parousia* was possible. The *unknowability* of the *Parousia*'s timing appears in the *watchfulness* parenthesis, the metaphors of the thief in the night, tarrying bridegroom, absent master, etc. But this observation did nothing to extinguish the hope that the *Parousia* could be near since the thief, the absent master, and the bridegroom could just as likely arrive earlier rather than later. Unlike the images of the unexpected *Parousia*, the motif of growth positively necessitates a significant period of time to pass between the sowing of the metaphorical seed and the eventual maturation of the plant and/or eschatological harvest (representing the *Parousia*).¹⁷⁴ Darrell Bock captures the delay of the *Parousia* in the parables of growth well:

¹⁷³ Mark's statement that the farmer "would sleep and rise night and day [καὶ καθεύδῃ καὶ ἐγείρηται νύκτα καὶ ἡμέραν]" suggests the passing of a significant portion of time in 4:27. Kümmel, *Promise and Fulfillment*, 128, concludes, "Clearly the parable has rather a comforting meaning: the Kingdom of God comes surely *without our being able to hinder or to hasten it* [emphasis mine]; the secrecy of its present reality must not be allowed to endanger this certainty."

¹⁷⁴ Dahl, "The Parables of Growth," 163, writes, "Before harvest, a time passes in which the seed grows without any activity of the farmer. Before the weeds and wheat are separated, they grow together in the field . . . In the same way, before the kingdom of God comes in glory, there must be a time in which its powers are at work, but in which what happens may seem insignificant, during which no zealot activity is undertaken to establish the kingdom. During this time the powers of evil are still at work and the pure community is not yet created, and the activity of the power of the kingdom often has no enduring results."

What is the Kingdom's character; what does it look like? These parables [of growth] contain a surprising answer to this question by picturing a gradual process of growth. Jewish expectation was of the quick establishment of a powerful, comprehensively present kingdom or of the kingdom's decisive in-breaking from outside of history. However, Jesus teaches that the kingdom comes gradually, with growth that will culminate in a total presence.¹⁷⁵

In terms of the Mustard Seed parable, the Synoptic Gospels stipulate that the eschatological consummation when the Gentiles come streaming to Israel and YHWH cannot happen *until* (e.g., Matt 13:31) "the bush has fully grown up."¹⁷⁶ In essence, the motif of growth imposes a period of time in which the message of Jesus will put down roots and put forth stalk and leaves before the fruit appears and the harvest of the *Parousia* commences.

Moreover, in the Mustard Seed parable we discern pastoral concern for the experience of delay. Hendrickx addresses this in the Markan Mustard Seed parable:

He [Mark] is clearly aware of the danger that threatens the faith of the early Christians. They may be scandalized in a similar way to the disciples during Jesus' ministry. They did not expect the present state of affairs. Had not Jesus triumphed over and defeated the opposition to the kingdom? Where was now the power and glory of the risen Christ? All such questions were very understandable in a situation in which the early Christians were kept waiting for the glorious (second) coming, the parousia, and had not yet given up the idea that this might come very soon. Mark's answer is: certainly, the beginning is small, but the kingdom is growing right now; it is definitely becoming something great, symbolized by the greatest of all shrubs, its putting out large branches, etc.¹⁷⁷

The Mustard Seed parable thus addresses the delay of the *Parousia*. The early Christian community's experience of delay not only created feelings of consternation about the ever lengthening period after Easter, but also feelings of discouragement due to the opposition and rejection stirred up by the publicizing of its message during that same period.¹⁷⁸ Indeed, in

¹⁷⁵ Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1221.

¹⁷⁶ Witherington III, *Jesus, Paul and the End of the World*, 1992), 138.

¹⁷⁷ Hendrickx, *The Parables of Jesus*, 40.

¹⁷⁸ Gager, *Kingdom and Community*, 43.

decades after Easter, the Christian community was small and struggling, not unlike the mustard seed or the wheat choked by the alien weeds. The assurance that the Mustard Seed provides is that *during the passage of the time of growth* (i.e., the delay), the tiny seed, whether understood as the Gospel in the parable of the Sower or the Christian community in the parable of the Weeds and Wheat, would mature into the “eschatological tree” of Ezek 17 (=Mark 4:32/Matt 13:32/Luke 13:19) or the renewed Israel, to which the Gentiles will stream before the *Parousia*.¹⁷⁹

F. The Message of the Parable of the Mustard Seed and Its Connection to the Delay of the Parousia and Gentile Inclusion

The parable of the Mustard seed unites Gentile inclusion, as illustrated by the nesting birds of the heavens, and the delay of the *Parousia*, as illustrated by the long process of growth from a tiny seed to a mature tree. In the parable, the early Christian community confronted the assertion that the Son of Man will tarry. In this period of time God has provided an opportunity for growth and maturation so that the early Christian community can accommodate interested Gentiles. Everything leading up to the end has happened and will happen according to counsel and on the schedule put in place by God himself.¹⁸⁰ Jeremias sums it up well, “With the same compelling certainty that causes a tall shrub to grow out of a minute grain of mustard-seed, or a small piece of leaven to produce a vast mass of dough, will God’s miraculous power cause a small band to

¹⁷⁹ Kingsbury, *The Parables of Jesus*, 83, notes, “The parable pictures the growth of a mustard plant, i.e. the development of something that God and not man prescribes. Now we know from 24.26f (cf. vv. 23-7) that Matthew’s Church was in some turmoil regarding the time when Jesus Son of Man would come again to inaugurate God’s end-time Kingdom. It is at least possible, therefore, that this parable contains something of a warning to the effect that the precise time for the unveiling of the end-time Kingdom lies solely in the hands of God: just as God determines when the mustard seed becomes a tree, so God will determine when the time is ripe for the coming of his great Realm. If this is accurate, the parable of the Mustard Seed can be seen to reflect something of the delay of the Parousia as Matthew’s Church experienced it.” Similarly C. E. B. Cranfield writes about the Markan parable, “When at last he [Christ] comes in his glory, who is himself the kingdom (cf. on i. 15), he will be not only the Judge of all men, but also the one under whose shadow all who have truly trusted in him will find shelter.” Cranfield, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark*, 191.

¹⁸⁰ Dahl, “The Parables of Growth,” 153.

swell into the mighty host of the people of God in the Messianic Age, embracing even the Gentiles.”¹⁸¹

IV. Conclusion

As we have reflected on the parables of the Weeds and Wheat and Mustard Seed, we have noted time and time again that the delay of the *Parousia* and Gentile inclusion are either woven into the fabric of the motif of growth or they appear as significant narrative details embedded within it. In some cases delay and Gentile inclusion are primary messages of the two parables (e.g., the householder’s command to wait for the harvest in Matt 13:29 and the image of the birds of air alighting on the “eschatological tree” in Mark 4:32/Matt 13:32/Luke 13:19). In others delay and Gentile inclusion are secondary (e.g., Matthew’s assertion that the field is the world in 13:37 and the implicit time-period needed to grow from a tiny seed to a mature shrub in the Mustard Seed parable). However, the fact that delay and Gentile inclusion are present in the motif of growth as developed in both parables indicates the importance of these themes to our broad understanding of early church’s eschatology. As the interval between Easter and the consummation protracted, the early Christian community came to view it as a divine provision for Gentile inclusion.

Now that we have analyzed the motif of growth in connection with delay and Gentile inclusion, we will turn our attention to another literary theme present in the NT parables: *the wedding feast*. To this end we will study the parable of the *Wedding Banquet* (Matt 22:1-14//Luke 14:15-23//*Gos. Thom.* 64) where we will also find a compelling amalgamation of the delay of the *Parousia* and Gentile inclusion.

¹⁸¹ Jeremias, *Parables*, 149.

CHAPTER SIX

THE DELAY OF THE PAROUSIA AND GENTILE INCLUSION IN THE PARABLE OF THE WEDDING FEAST/GREAT BANQUET

Throughout this study, we have argued that the experience of the delay of the *Parousia* created consternation in the early Christian community which hoped that the *Parousia* would happen sooner rather than later.¹ The early Christian community was not entirely unprepared for the possibility of the delay since some of the earliest images describing the *Parousia* in the primitive Christian literature centered on its *unexpectedness* such as the parable of the Thief, the “Watchfulness Parenesis,” etc.² As time passed, the early Christian movement increasingly understood that the interim period had meaning beyond the ethical preparation encouraged in the watchfulness parenesis³ discussed in Chapter One. Many early Christian communities eventually understood this period of delay as a divinely appointed time for Gentile inclusion into the predominantly Jewish movement. This consideration became *one* important motivation behind the expansion of Christianity among non-Jews.⁴ The aim of this study is to present evidence for the connection of the delay of the *Parousia* to the motif of Gentile inclusion in the parables. For this reason, we turn our attention from the parables of growth (Chapter Five) and toward the motif of the eschatological banquet as described in the parable of the Great Banquet (Luke and *Gos. Thom.*) or Wedding Feast (Matthew). In this parable (Matt 22:1-14//Luke 14:15-23//*Gos. Thom.* 64), we will also find an amalgamation of the delay of the *Parousia* with Gentile inclusion.

I. Introduction: The Wedding Feast/Great Banquet as Allegory for the Eschatological Banquet of YHWH

¹ See pages 2-4 of Chapter One.

² See page 26-33 of Chapter One.

³ The watchfulness parenesis is found in (1) the parable/simile of the Thief (Matt 24:42-44//Luke 12:39-40; 1 Thess 5:2, 4; 2 Pet 3:10; Rev 3:3 and 16:15); (2) the Gospel sayings on Noah (Matt 24:37-39//Luke 17:26-27) and Lot (Luke 17:28-29); (3) the parable of the Doorkeeper (Mark 13:34-37//Luke 12:35-38); and (4) the Parable of the Ten Virgins (Matt 25:1-13).

⁴ See Chapter Four.

Like the metaphor of growth until the harvest which we analyzed in the preceding chapter, the metaphor of the banquet or wedding feast is eschatological.⁵ The image of the pilgrimage of the nations to Zion discussed in Chapter Three forms an important part of the background of the motif of the eschatological banquet or wedding feast in the early Christian literature.⁶ The Prophets imagined the Gentile nations flocking to Zion from the ends of the earth to make obeisance to YHWH and share in the eschatological meal of Israel. Though there may perhaps be no direct literary connection,⁷ Isa 25:6-8 illustrates the similarities between the Hebrew Scripture's concept of the eschatological banquet and the NT motif of the banquet or wedding feast: "On this mountain the Lord Almighty will prepare a feast of rich foods for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine—the best meats and the finest of wines" (v. 6).⁸ In his analysis of these verses, MacDonald notes, "The eschatological meal in Isa. 25.6-8 is, therefore, rightly seen as a

⁵ In the parable of the Great Banquet (Luke)/Wedding Feast (Matt), we have decided to treat two closely related "forms" of the Eschatological Banquet together. In *Fellowship and Food in the Kingdom: Eschatological Meals and Scenes of Utopian Abundance in the New Testament* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 22-26, Peter-Ben Smit defines "Celebratory Banquets" (in which he places Luke 14:15-23) and "Eschatological Wedding Celebrations" (in which he places Matt 22:1-14) as subdivisions of "Eschatological Banquets." However, Dennis E. Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist, the Banquet in the Early Christian World* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 169, treats both the "celebratory banquet" and the "eschatological wedding feast" together. Smith writes, "The messianic banquet is sometimes represented as a wedding banquet, a motif that is closely related to the victory banquet in its mythological origins and connections with the themes of victory and kingship of the god. More specifically, this motif is related to the theme of the 'sacred marriage,' a concept with a rich heritage from ancient Near Eastern myth and ritual. This theme is especially prominent in biblical literature as a symbol for the relationship of God to the people of Israel, or, in the NT, as a symbol for the relationship of Christ to the church." While perhaps some advantage could be gained by distinguishing forms like "celebratory banquets" and "eschatological wedding celebrations," we will consider them together in this chapter since we will be arguing that a common source underlies both the Lukan and Matthean parables. In effect, Matt and Luke drew on different aspects of the same eschatological banquet imagery in the development of their respective parables.

⁶ There are a number of texts that allude to this eschatological movement of the nations to Israel: Ps 87; Isa 2:1-4 (par. Mi 4:1-4); 18:7; 25:6-8; 66:18-19; Jer 3:17; 16:19; Mic 7:12; Zeph 3:8-10; Zech 2:10-13; 8:20-23; and 14:16-19.

⁷ Smit, *Fellowship and Food*, 23.

⁸ Dennis E. Smith, "Table Fellowship as a Literary Motif in the Gospel of Luke," *JBL* 106.4 (1987), 626, writes, "In apocalyptic literature, the theme of the messianic banquet, or the eschatological banquet, appears to be a widespread symbol used to refer to the joys of the new age. The idea appears to derive from OT traditions that take up the theme of the joyous feast before Yahweh and apply it to the joys of the future. Most notable among these texts is Isaiah 25:6: 'On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined.'"

meal that celebrates YHWH's kingship over the earth. Consequently all the nations are invited to the meal."⁹ There are aspects within the broader literary unit (24:21-25:12) containing vv. 6-8 that suggest that the author has in mind YHWH's coronation ceremony on Mt. Zion.¹⁰ In fact, Hagelia has argued that this royal banquet in which the Gentile nations are participants is actually a *covenant meal*, suggesting a significant and enduring relationship between Israel, its God, and the nations.¹¹ These verses and others like them portray Israel's hope that its final deliverance would take the form of a banquet where the nations would pay homage to YHWH's universal kingship at Zion.

The image of eschatological wedding feast or banquet foreseen by the Prophets only grew in stature during the Second Temple period. The images of eschatological banquets in the Hebrew Scriptures influenced first century Judaism, effectively laying the foundation for many rabbinical banquet parables in the following centuries.¹² Jesus' contemporaries would have been aware of the image of wedding feast or banquet: "The hope of eating and drinking amid the transformed conditions of existence in the coming age would have been familiar to any Jew of Jesus' day

⁹ Nathan MacDonald, *Not Bread Alone, the Uses of Food in the Old Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 194.

¹⁰ Hallvard Hagelia, "Meal on Mt. Zion—Does Isa 25:6-8 Describe a Covenant Meal," *SEÁ* 68 (2003), 85, notes, "The joyful banquet for the peoples is without parallels in the Hebrew Bible. Just foreign peoples are invited, not Israel. Behind it, we find the old tradition of the peoples' pilgrimage to Zion (cf. 2:24 and 11:9-10). The meal at Zion should be connected with the eschatological arrival of Yahweh's dominion."

¹¹ Hagalia, "Meal on Mt. Zion," 92, "In this investigation, we have documented several examples of a close relation between meals or banquets and covenanting. It has not been so usual to see Isa 25:6-8 as describing a covenant banquet. Focus has been on the meal itself as an eschatological banquet. Again, no ברית is mentioned. However, the inter-textual investigation made here opens for extended interpretation, a step further from the bare banquet interpretation. When Isa 25:6-8 compared inter-textually with the related texts in 24:5-6; 28:7ff and 55:1-5 it seems necessary to read more out of it than has usually been done; it opens for reading it as a description of a covenant banquet."

¹² Rueven Kipperwasser, "A Bizarre Invitation to a King's Banquet: The Metamorphosis of a Parable Tradition and the Transformation of an Eschatological Idea," *Proof* 33.2 (2014), 21, writes, "The sumptuous eschatological banquet Isaiah describes is an expression of divine triumph and victory. I believe that this motif, which makes its first appearance here, proliferates and expands in the later phase of the Second Temple period, becoming widespread in rabbinic literature."

who was acquainted with the Scriptures and tradition.”¹³ In a portion dated from between 100 B.C. to the early first century A.D., *1 En.* 62:14 refers to eating and drinking with the Son of Man at the consummation of all things: “The Lord of the Spirits shall abide over them; they shall eat and rest and rise with that Son of Man forever and ever.”¹⁴ The Apocryphon of Ezekiel, an apocryphal Jewish work dating from no later than A.D. 80-90 when it was quoted by Clement of Rome, also contains an eschatologically-orientated “wedding banquet” parable.¹⁵ However, outside of the presence of a king, a wedding feast, and invitees, there is little resemblance to the parable of the Wedding Feast/Great Banquet in the Synoptic Gospels and the *Gos. Thom.* In fact, the main point of the Apocryphon of Ezekiel is that the body and soul will be united at the Resurrection and held accountable for all the sins that the person committed in life.¹⁶

Another important component in the background of early Christian motif of the wedding feast or eschatological banquet is the practice of banqueting in Greco-Roman Antiquity. Dennis Smith argues that first century Jewish banqueting and feasting closely paralleled the Greco-Roman banquet or symposium where the host issued invitations and celebrants ate a sumptuous meal in the reclining position followed by drinking and philosophical discourse.¹⁷ According to

¹³ Richard Heirs, *Jesus and the Future* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1991), 80-81.

¹⁴ Translation by E. Isaac, “1 (Ethiopic Apocalypse of) Enoch,” in *OTP*, 1:44. For a discussion of the dating of the contents of *1 En.*, see pages 6-7.

¹⁵ Kipperwasser, “A Bizarre Invitation,” 167. There are some interesting similarities between the parable of the Wedding Feast/Great Banquet and the *Apocr. Ezek.* 1:1-4: “A certain king had everyone in his kingdom drafted, and had no civilians except two only: one lame man and one blind man, and each one sat by himself and lived by himself. And when the king was preparing a wedding feast for his own son, he invited all those in his kingdom, but he snubbed the two civilians, the lame man and the blind man.” Trans. J. R. Mueller and S. E. Robinson, “Apocryphon of Ezekiel,” in *OTP*, 1:487-495.

¹⁶ Mueller and Robinson, “Apocryphon of Ezekiel,” 1:489.

¹⁷ Smith, *Symposium*, 171, “The meal traditions in Judaism are often studied as if they were a unique phenomenon. This study has attempted to place them in the broader world of the Greco-Roman banquet. To be sure, there were distinctive features in the Jewish tradition, but the form taken by Jewish meals in the Greco-Roman period on any particular occasion or in any particular setting was that of the Greco-Roman banquet. Furthermore, the ideology of the meal was also that of the Greco-Roman banquet. Indeed, the literary tradition utilized to describe Jewish meals largely derived from the Greek symposium tradition. Especially notable is the way that meals

Smith, the motif of Eschatological Banquet or Wedding Feast “is especially associated with apocalyptic traditions of Judaism. However, like other apocalyptic motifs, the messianic banquet has its origins in a complex mythological heritage from the ancient Near East and is supplemented in the later periods by Hellenistic parallels.”¹⁸ Smith finds parallels to the Greco-Roman symposium especially in the practice of inviting and receiving guests.¹⁹ Since the concept of banqueting was already a stock theme in the first century Greco-Roman context, the collectors of early Christian traditions easily incorporated it as a literary motif into their writings.²⁰

In addition to the parable of the Great Banquet/Wedding Feast itself, the image of banquet or wedding feast appears broadly in the NT. For example, it appears in the feeding miracles (Matt 14:13-21//Mark 6:31-44//Luke 9:10-17//John 6:5-15; Matt 15:32-16:10//Mark 8:1-9), the “East/West Sayings” (Matt 8:11-12//Luke 13:28-30), the parable of the Virgins (Matt 25:1-13), the Last Supper narratives (Matt 26:29//Mark 14:25//Luke 22:18),²¹ Rev 3:20 (“I will come in and eat with him, and he with me [εἰσελεύσομαι πρὸς αὐτὸν καὶ δειπήσω μετ’ αὐτοῦ καὶ αὐτὸς μετ’ ἐμοῦ]”), and 19:9 (“Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb

functioned to define group identity within Judaism, as different groups distinguished themselves from the rest of Judaism by their table practices.”

¹⁸ Smith, *Symposium*, 168-169.

¹⁹ Smith, *Symposium*, 139.

²⁰ Smith, *Symposium*, 220, claims, “The earliest written materials utilized these already existing motifs in the tradition and enlarge and expand on them, drawing especially upon the varied usages of the banquet motif in Greco-Roman literature. The Gospels continued this trend, so that the banquet became a stock literary motif to serve the theological interests of the individual Gospel writers. In addition, references to meal traditions in the Gospels served to enhance the communal meals being practiced in their communities.”

²¹ Matt/Mark: “I will not drink of this fruit of the vine again [Matt: “from now on”] until that day [ἕως τῆς ἡμέρας ἐκείνης] when I drink it anew [Matt: “with you”] in my Father’s kingdom [ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ πατρὸς μου]. Luke: “For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes [ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ ἔλθῃ].”

[μακάριοι οἱ εἰς τὸ δεῖπνον τοῦ γάμου τοῦ ἀρνίου κεκλημένοι]”).²² These texts demonstrate that the motif of the wedding feast or banquet is extremely significant to NT eschatology.²³

In the Gospels specifically the image of wedding feast or banquet becomes fused to the dynamic concept of the *kingdom of God* (or the “kingdom of Heaven” in Matthew). As Beasley-Murray notes, “It may be assumed that the basic image in this parable [Wedding Feast/Banquet]—the great feast provided by one with resources to give it and to invite many to it—reflects the long-standing symbol of the kingdom of God as a feast.”²⁴ Thus, in the Synoptic parables, the motif of wedding feast or banquet transitions from a prophetic image into the stockpile of metaphors mined by the Gospel writers to illustrate the kingdom of God in its present and, especially, its future iterations. As part of this stock of metaphors, the wedding feast or banquet referred to the complex of events at the end of time initiated by (or perhaps even contemporaneous with) the *Parousia* of the Son of the Man as Matthew demonstrates in the parable of the Virgins (25:1-13).²⁵

However, for the purposes of this study, we are not interested in parables referring to the *Parousia* alone. We are specifically interested in parables that appeal to both the inclusion of Gentiles and the delay of the *Parousia*. It is in this sense that we turn our attention to the parable of the Wedding Feast (Matt 22:1-14) or Great Banquet (Luke 14:15-23//*Gos. Thom.* 64). We will

²² See Heirs, *Jesus and the Future*, 73-77. We could also argue that the feeding miracles in the Synoptic Gospels are related to the motif of the eschatological banquet.

²³ Smit, *Fellowship and Food*, 22-26 contains a list of NT texts related to the Eschatological Banquet. Smit does not mention the feeding miracles though it could be argued that such miracles prefigure the Synoptic presentation of the Last Supper. J. Lyle Story, “All Is Now Ready: An Exegesis of the ‘The Great Banquet’ (Luke 14:15-24) and ‘The Marriage Feast’ (Matthew 22:2-14),” *ATI* 2.2 (2009), 67, writes, “The theme of the banquet is used consistently within Judaism to express the Messianic Feast to be celebrated at the end of the age. In Jesus’ actions and parables, the meal is used as a proleptic celebration of the Messianic Age.”

²⁴ Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 120.

²⁵ Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 51.

argue that both of these parables contain references to the delay of the *Parousia* and Gentile inclusion on the allegorical level.

Like the parable of the Weeds and Wheat, the two versions of the parable of the Wedding Feast/Great Banquet as we have received them from the Synoptics are, without doubt, allegories (though to differing degrees).²⁶ Since we addressed the methodological issues arising from interpretation of allegory in the preface of this study,²⁷ we will only make a few brief comments here. With the exception of simple similes, many of Jesus' parables have *allegorical significance* since they contain both literal and metaphorical meaning(s).²⁸ However, the two versions of the parables of the Wedding Feast/Great Banquet are full-fledged *allegories* since they contain a series of complex metaphors in which the main elements of the narrative to refer realities outside the story's purview.²⁹ Moreover, these allegories make heavy use of the theological themes present in their respective Gospels. Unlike the parables of the Weeds and Wheat or the Sower/Soils, there is no list of allegorical equivalencies to signal an allegorical reading of the parable and aide its interpretation (e.g., Mark 4:13-20//Matt 13:18-23//Luke 8:11-15; Matt 13:37). For this reason, we must briefly demonstrate that the Wedding Feast/Banquet parable is indeed an eschatological allegory. We must defend our search for "post-Easter" concepts like the *Parousia*'s delay and Gentile inclusion within the literary form of a parable attributed to Jesus.

Perhaps in its original *Sitz im Leben Jesu*, the parable of the Wedding Feast/Great Banquet referred to the common-place events that Jesus employed to address the everyday issues faced by

²⁶ Scholars consider Matthew's parable of the Wedding Feast to be the most allegorical in nature, while the Lukan//Thomassine parable of the Great Banquet is considered to be less so. See Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus*, 337; Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew XIX-XXVIII*, 200; Scott, *Hear Then a Parable*, 163-164; etc.

²⁷ See pages x-xiv.

²⁸ Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables*, 42.

²⁹ Blomberg, *Parables*, 55.

a first century Palestinian-Jewish audience.³⁰ In his fairly extensive analysis of the historicity of the banquet theme in the NT, Smith argues that the only banquet motifs which can reliably be said to come from Jesus revolve around his own personal meals with his followers which resembled Greco-Roman symposia.³¹ Smith argues that the disputation meals with the Pharisees (such as that which occasions the parable of the Minas in Luke) are redactional features since they contain vocabulary and images preferred by the Evangelists.³² In the Third Gospel table-fellowship is an especially important venue for Luke to “accentuate specific nuances of the Jesus event” and for the Lukan Jesus “to warn, teach, and correct his opponents.”³³ It is likely that the tradition that contained the parable of the Talents/Minas arose from the memory of Jesus’ own “table-talk” during meals with acquaintances which were an important part of Ancient Near-Eastern hospitality. Since it is not our interest to reflect on historicity of the parables, we can simply note that the motif of the eschatological banquet or wedding feast as developed in the early Christian literature we are studying is extremely appropriate to the historical experience of Palestinian Jews in the first century.

In our analysis, we will show that this parable of the Great Banquet/Wedding Feast, as we have received it from Matthew, Luke, and *Gos. Thom.*, addresses the later challenges of the delay

³⁰ On several occasions we have noted that it is not the intention of this study to delve into questions of the historical development of the sayings and parables ascribed to Jesus.

³¹ Smith, *Symposium*, 221-225.

³² Smith, *Symposium*, 224.

³³ J. Lyle Story, “One Banquet with Many Courses,” *JBPR* 4 (2012), 67, writes, “Luke’s literary and theological artistry is unmistakable as he narrates various stories, parables (‘lessons’) surrounding meals in the context of Middle-Eastern ‘hospitality.’ Each ‘meal’ passage presents ‘table-talk’ that accentuates a specific nuance of the Jesus-event. Since the majority of the meal-passages are set in a context of hostility against Jesus, he uses the atmosphere to warn, teach and correct his opponents. Each of these events became teaching moments, in which Jesus’ practice and teaching subverts cultural, religious and socio-economic norms.”

of the *Parousia* and the growing presence of Gentiles in the early Christian community.³⁴ Even though the issues discussed in the parables of the Wedding Feast/Great Banquet are “post-Easter” in nature, the terms (e.g., king, son, invitees, householder, feast, etc.) were already known to have allegorical significance even in Jesus’ day.³⁵

Several factors show that the two versions of parable of the Wedding Feast/Great Banquet are allegories. First, the parables’ context suggests they are intended as allegories. Luke’s opening macarism in 14:15, “Blessed [μακάριος] is the one [ὅστις] who will eat at the feast [literally: eat bread] in the kingdom of God,” indicates that the parable of the Great Banquet will address *the eschatological banquet* and not just feasting in general as do the preceding verses (vv. 12-14).³⁶ Second, the close linguistic link between the allegory of the Tenants (21:33-46) in Matthew bestows allegorical significance to the parable of the Wedding Feast since both share references to a son, murdered servants, a war upon offenders, and the replacement of one group of people (original tenants and invitees) with another (new tenants and invitees).³⁷ Unusual narrative details in both accounts such as the mistreatment of the servants and destruction of the offenders’ “city” (Matthew), the castigation of merchants (*Gos. Thom.*), and the multiple

³⁴ In his discussion of the allegorical development of the parable of the Wedding Feast/Great Banquet, Jeremias writes, “We have seen that the primitive Church had applied many parables to its own situation, characterized by the delay of the *Parousia* and Gentile mission. One of the expedients made use of by the Church in the process of reinterpreting the parables was the allegorical method of interpretation. In the foremost place we find christological allegorizing: the thief, the bridegroom, the master of the house, the merchant, the king were interpreted of Christ, where originally the self-revelation of Christ was for the most part veiled, and hinted at in a few of the parables.” Jeremias, *Parables*, 66.

³⁵ Blomberg, *Parables*, 37, notes, “More recent studies have surveyed the imagery of various Old Testament and intertestamental texts and expanded the list of stock symbols which would have had relatively fixed meanings in Jesus’ day. Among the most important for interpreting Jesus’ parables are: a father, king, judge or shepherd for God; a vineyard, vine or sheep for God’s people; an enemy for the devil; a harvest or grape-gathering for the final judgment; and a wedding, feast or festal clothing for the Messianic banquet in the age to come.”

³⁶ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, 1052. Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1272, writes: “The banquet imagery and the mention of the resurrection of the righteous in Luke 14:14 causes one of the guests to reflect on the greatest banquet of all: the eschatological fellowship that comes in God’s future glorious kingdom (Isa. 25:6; also Ps. 22:26 [22:27 MT]; 23:5 [in a non-eschatological sense]; 1 Enoch 62.14; Luke 22:16; Rev. 19:9.”

³⁷ Young, *Jesus and His Jewish Parables*, 170.

invitations (Luke) all strongly suggest the presence of allegory.³⁸ Finally, as we mentioned above, these parables draw upon the vivid images of the eschatological banquet and thus encourage the Matthean, Lukan, and *Thomassine* audience to unearth deeper meanings.³⁹

Despite general agreement that the two versions of the parable of the Wedding Feast/Great Banquet are allegories, there is not complete unanimity on the subject. Blomberg,⁴⁰ France,⁴¹ and Bauckham⁴² are among a minority of authors who reject or question allegorical interpretations of these parables on the level of the Gospel texts themselves, choosing instead to argue that the unusual terms in the parables either reflect real situations that hearers would be familiar with or that they appeal to other ancient texts that the readers would have known. In the end, efforts to deny the allegorical significance of the two versions of the parables of Wedding Feast/Great Banquet founder because their ideas and terminology, which already have allegorical significance before their incorporation into the Synoptics and the *Gos. Thom.*, necessarily draw the reader into a narrative that functions on multiple levels. Simply the term *κεκλημένοι* (the “called”) used by Matthew (22:14) and Luke (14:17) as a reference to those invited to the feast suggests an allegorical identification with Israel⁴³ and the church.⁴⁴ Other terms of allegorical

³⁸ See Davies and Allison, *Matthew XIX-XXVIII*, 196-197; Story, “All Is Now Ready,” 75, 77; Daniel C. Olson, “Matthew 22:1-14 as Midrash,” *CBQ* 67 (2005): 436-437; and Hultgren, *Parables*, 337.

³⁹ Scott argues that the images of the eschatological banquet were operative in the imagination of the hearers: “As the parable was transmitted, the mytheme reasserted itself. In Luke, at the story’s end the master excludes those who have rejected this invitation from *ever* tasting the banquet. This is a threat only if the master is the Lord, which is the case in Luke’s allegory. . . In *Thomas*, those who fail are deprived of the ultimate benefit of wisdom, a place with My Father. In Matthew, the mytheme fully reasserts itself and a king gives a wedding feast and does indeed take his vengeance on those who have insulted his honor.” Scott, *Hear then a Parable*, 172-173. See also Davies and Allison, *Matthew XIX-XXVIII*, 198-199.

⁴⁰ Blomberg, *Parables*, 237-240.

⁴¹ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 822-23.

⁴² Richard Bauckham, “The Parable of the Royal Wedding Feast (Matt 22:1-14) and the Parable of the Lame Man and the Blind Man (Apocryphon of Ezekiel),” *JBL* 115.3 (1996): 482-484.

⁴³ J. A. Sanders, “Ethic of Election in Luke’s Great Banquet Parable,” in *Essays in Old Testament Ethics* (ed. James Crenshaw and John Willis; New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1974), 245-271.

significance in the parable include the king/householder (=God), Matthew's son (=Christ), banquet/wedding feast (=eschatological banquet), original invitees (=Israel), Luke's second group of invitees (=the righteous 'leftovers' of Israel), the third group of invitees (=Gentiles), and Matthew's white garments (=righteous deeds). These terms will be explained below.

Now that we have addressed the question of allegory, we may continue into the main body of our analysis. As in our previous efforts, first we will address the relationship of the three occurrences (in Matthew, Luke, and *Gos. Thom.*) of the parable of the Wedding Feast/Great Banquet to one another (i.e., the redaction) in order to grasp the unique themes in each. Second, we will look at the context of the different versions of the parables and what it reveals about the themes of delay and Gentile inclusion. Next, we will analyze the organization of the versions of the parables with the same goal. Fourth, we will spend considerable time addressing several thorny issues of interpretation in the parables that have a significant bearing on our argument about the motifs of the delay of the *Parousia* and Gentile inclusion. Fifth, we will summarize the evidence in the different versions of parable that appeals to delay and Gentile inclusion and make some concluding comments about the message of the parable.

II. The Relationship of the Two Versions of the Parables of the Wedding Feast/Great Banquet to One Another (Redaction)

The question of the redaction of the parable of the Wedding Feast (Matthew) or Great Banquet (Luke and *Gos. Thom.*) is complex and the relationships between the three occurrences are rather murky. Furthermore, there is no scholarly consensus on the relationship between the

⁴⁴ See Karl Ludwig Schmidt, "καλέω, κτλ," *TDNT* 3.489.

three occurrences of the parable.⁴⁵ A brief look at figure one below will reveal the diversity in the different versions of the parable.

Figure 1: A Synopsis of the Parable of the Wedding Feast/Great Banquet				
Parable of the Wedding Feast Matt 22:1-14		Parable of the Great Banquet Luke 14:15-23		Parable of the Great Banquet Gos. Thom. 64 ⁴⁶
		15a	Ἀκούσας δέ τις τῶν συνανακειμένων ταῦτα	
		15b	εἶπεν αὐτῷ·	
		15c	μακάριος ὅστις φάγεται ἄρτον ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ.	
1a	Καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ Ἰησοῦς πάλιν εἶπεν ἐν παραβολαῖς αὐτοῖς λέγων·	16a	Ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτῷ	Jesus said,
2a	ὡμοιώθη ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν			
2a-b	ἄνθρωπῳ βασιλεῖ, ὅστις ἐποίησεν γάμους τῷ υἱῷ αὐτοῦ.	16b	ἄνθρωπός τις ἐποίει δεῖπνον μέγα	A man had received visitors.
3a	καὶ ἀπέστειλεν τοὺς δούλους αὐτοῦ καλέσαι τοὺς κεκλημένους εἰς τοὺς γάμους,	16c 17a 17b 17c 17d	καὶ ἐκάλεσεν πολλοὺς καὶ ἀπέστειλεν τὸν δούλον αὐτοῦ τῇ ὥρᾳ τοῦ δεῖπνου εἰπεῖν τοῖς κεκλημένοις· ἔρχεσθε, ὅτι ἡδὴ ἑτοιμά ἐστιν.	And when he had prepared the dinner, he sent his servant to invite the guests.
3b	καὶ οὐκ ἤθελον ἐλθεῖν.	18a	ἦρξαντο ἀπὸ μιᾶς πάντες παραιτεῖσθαι.	
4a	πάλιν ἀπέστειλεν ἄλλους δούλους λέγων·	Material unique to Matthew		
4b	εἶπατε τοῖς κεκλημένοις·			
4c	ἰδοὺ τὸ ἄριστόν μου ἡτοίμακα,			
4d	οἱ ταῦροί μου καὶ τὰ σιτιστὰ τεθυμένα καὶ πάντα ἑτοιμα·			
4e	δεῦτε εἰς τοὺς γάμους.			
5a	οἱ δὲ ἀμελήσαντες ἀπῆλθον,	18b	ὁ πρῶτος εἶπεν αὐτῷ·	And he went to the first one and said to him, ‘My master invites you.’
5b 5c	ὃς μὲν εἰς τὸν ἴδιον ἀγρόν, ὃς δὲ ἐπὶ τὴν ἐμπορίαν αὐτοῦ·	18c 18d 18e 18f	ἀγρόν ἠγόρασα καὶ ἔχω ἀνάγκην ἐξελθὼν ἰδεῖν αὐτόν· ἐρωτῶ σε ἔχε με παρητημένον.	He said, ‘I have claims against some merchants. They are coming to me this evening. I must go and give them my orders. I ask to be excused from the dinner.
No excuse from a third		19a	καὶ ἕτερος εἶπεν	He went to another and said to

⁴⁵ Hultgren, *Parables*, 334-335, has a very good discussion of the different options regarding the relationships between the parables of Matt, Luke and Gos. Thom.

⁴⁶ Lambdin translation from James Robinson, ed., *The Coptic Gnostic Library*, 2.52-95.

invitee in Matthew				him, ‘My master has invited you.’		
		19b 19c 19d 19e	ζεύγη βοῶν ἡγόρασα πέντε καὶ πορεύομαι δοκιμάσαι αὐτά ἔρωτῶ σε, ἔχε με παρητημένον.	He said to him, ‘I have just bought a house and am required for the day. I shall not have any spare time.’		
		20a	καὶ ἕτερος εἶπεν·	He went to another and said to him, ‘My master invites you.’		
		20b 20c	γυναῖκα ἑγῆμα καὶ διὰ τοῦτο οὐ δύναμαι ἐλθεῖν.	He said to him, ‘My friend is going to get married and I am to prepare a banquet. I shall not be able to come. I ask to be excused from the dinner.		
		No excuse from a fourth invitee in Luke and Matthew			He went to another and said to him, ‘My master invites you.’	
He said to him, ‘I have just bought a farm, and I am on my way to collect the rent.’ I shall not be able to come. I ask to be excused.						
6a	οἱ δὲ λοιποὶ κρατήσαντες τοὺς δούλους αὐτοῦ ὕβρισαν	Attack and killing of servants is unique to Matthew				
6b	καὶ ἀπέκτειναν.					
No announcement to householder/king in Matthew		21a	καὶ παραγενόμενος ὁ δοῦλος ἀπήγγειλεν τῷ κυρίῳ αὐτοῦ ταῦτα.	The servant returned and said, ‘Those you invited to dinner have asked to be excused.’		
7a	ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς ὠργίσθη	21b	τότε ὀργισθεῖς ὁ οἰκοδεσπότης	Killing of the invitees and destruction of “their city” is unique to Matthew		
7b	καὶ πέμψας τὰ στρατεύματα αὐτοῦ ἀπώλεσεν τοὺς φονεῖς ἐκείνους					
7c	καὶ τὴν πόλιν αὐτῶν ἐνέπρησεν.					
8a	τότε λέγει τοῖς δούλοις αὐτοῦ·	21c	εἶπεν τῷ δούλῳ αὐτοῦ·	The master said to his servant,		
8b	ὁ μὲν γάμος ἑτοιμός ἐστιν,	No statement about the unworthiness of the original invitees in Luke and Gos. Thom.				
8c	οἱ δὲ κεκλημένοι οὐκ ἦσαν ἄξιοι·					
9a	πορεύεσθε οὖν ἐπὶ τὰς διεξόδους τῶν ὁδῶν	21d	ἔξελθε ταχέως εἰς τὰς πλατείας καὶ ῥύμας τῆς πόλεως	‘Go outside to the streets		
9b	καὶ ὅσους ἐὰν εὔρητε καλέσατε εἰς τοὺς γάμους.	21e	καὶ τοὺς πτωχοὺς καὶ ἀναπίρους καὶ τυφλοὺς καὶ χωλοὺς εἰσάγαγε ὧδε.	and bring back those you happen to meet so that they may dine.’		
10a 10b 10c	καὶ ἐξελθόντες οἱ δοῦλοι ἐκεῖνοι εἰς τὰς ὁδοὺς συνήγαγον πάντας οὓς εὔρον, πονηροὺς τε καὶ ἀγαθοὺς·	The Gos. Thom. does not have a third invitation				
					22a	καὶ εἶπεν ὁ δοῦλος·
					22b 22c	κύριε, γέγονεν ὃ ἐπέταξας καὶ ἔτι τόπος ἐστίν.

		23a	καὶ εἶπεν ὁ κύριος πρὸς τὸν δοῦλον·	
		23b	ἔξελθε εἰς τὰς ὁδοὺς καὶ φραγμούς	
		23c	καὶ ἀνάγκασον εἰσελθεῖν,	
10c	καὶ ἐπλήσθη ὁ γάμος ἀνακειμένων.	23d	ἵνα γεμισθῇ μου ὁ οἶκος	
11a	εἰσελθὼν δὲ ὁ βασιλεὺς θεάσασθαι τοὺς ἀνακειμένους	<i>Parable of Guest without Wedding Cloths does not exist in Luke or the Gos. Thom.</i>		
11b	εἶδεν ἐκεῖ ἄνθρωπον			
11c	οὐκ ἐνδεδυμένον ἔνδυμα γάμου,			
12a	καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ			
12b	ἑταῖρε, πῶς εἰσηλθες ὧδε μὴ ἔχων ἔνδυμα γάμου;			
12c	ὁ δὲ ἐφίμωθη.			
13a	τότε ὁ βασιλεὺς εἶπεν τοῖς διακόνοις·			
13b	πῶς καὶ χεῖρας ἐκβάλετε αὐτὸν εἰς τὸ σκότος τὸ ἐξώτερον·			
13c	ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὁδόντων.			
14a	πολλοὶ γάρ εἰσιν κλητοί , ὀλίγοι δὲ ἐκλεκτοί.	24a	λέγω γὰρ ὑμῖν ὅτι οὐδεὶς τῶν ἀνδρῶν ἐκείνων τῶν κεκλημένων γεύσεται μου τοῦ δείπνου.	Businessmen and merchants will not enter the places of my father.

Based on the resemblance of the Lukan and *Thomassine* versions,⁴⁷ three options seem most likely with regard to the relationship between all three.⁴⁸ Either (1) Matthew's parable and Luke's parable come from their own unique sources (i.e., "M" and "L" respectively) and the *Gos. Thom.* depends on Luke (or Luke's source); or (2) Matthew and Luke share the same source (Q) and the *Gos. Thom.* depends on Luke.⁴⁹ It is also possible (3) that the *Gos. Thom.* used an independent source or tradition while Matthew and Luke used a shared source (Q).⁵⁰ However, the following evidence suggests that *Gos. Thom.* was influenced by Luke or Luke's source: (a)

⁴⁷ Fitzmyer, *Luke X-XXIV*, 1051.

⁴⁸ Hultgren, *Parables*, 334.

⁴⁹ Minor adjustments could be made to this framework including hypothesizing that Matt used his special source "M" while Luke and *Gos. Thom.* used "Q." Another option, which we will mention below, is that Matt and Luke had different Q-traditions that branched off an earlier Q-version at some point.

⁵⁰ See Davies and Allison, *Matthew XIX-XXVIII*, 195.

the order of the sayings in the *Gos. Thom.* is nearly identical (see figure above) to Luke⁵¹ (b) *Thomassine* differences in content and terminology can easily be attributed to gnosticizing disdain for wealth and commerce seen in the preceding (logion 63) and following logion (65),⁵² and (c) both the *Gos. Thom.* and Luke refer to a “dinner”⁵³ instead of Matthew’s “wedding feast.”⁵⁴ Thus, it seems best to retain a loose connection between Luke and the *Gos. Thom.*⁵⁵ Below we will discuss and evaluate the first two options, i.e., (1) and (2) above.

A. Evidence that the Parable of the Wedding Feast (Matt) and the Parable of the Great Banquet (Luke and *Gos. Thom.*) Are Independent

With regard to Matthew and Luke, many commentators argue that they depend on different traditions.⁵⁶ Darell Bock gives an apt summary of such reasoning,

Some of these differences could be explained as specification of certain points or as deletion, but the sheer number of differences and the absence of corresponding

⁵¹ W. J. C. Weren, “From Q to Matthew 22,1-14,” in *The Sayings Source Q and the Historical Jesus* (ed. A. Lindemann; Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 661.

⁵² Simon Gathercole, *The Gospel of Thomas*, 454.

⁵³ *Gos. Thom.* uses the Coptic equivalent of Luke’s δειπνον.

⁵⁴ Smit, *Food and Fellowship*, 160, rejects the suggestion of a Lukan influence on *Gos. Thom.* based on the following grounds: (1) unlike Luke, *Gos. Thom.* does not suggest the meal is large; and (2) *Gos. Thom.* has no double sending of the servant. However, Fitzmeyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, 1051, notes the close resemblance between the *Thomassine* and Lukan versions of the parable apart from several obvious differences that address *Thomas*’ own theological convictions. Jacques-É Ménéard, *L’Évangile selon Thomas* (Leiden: Brill, 1975), 165, argues that Luke and *Gos. Thom.* represent a more primitive but parallel tradition, “C’est dire que Thomas pourrait signifier, surtout si l’on tient compte de son emploi du discours direct, signe de primitivité, qu’il refête une tradition parallèle à celle de *Lc* et qui pourrait être plus ancienne que celle de *Mt.*”

⁵⁵ Young, *Jesus and His Jewish Parables*, 172, writes, “Interestingly much of the parallelisms contained in Luke and to a certain extent in the Gospel of Thomas, which make for a good story and very likely come from the Semitic background of the parable, do not appear in Matthew.” Hultgren, *Parables*, 335-336, contains a good discussion of reasons for and against a Synoptic influence on *Gos. Thom.*

⁵⁶ See Kloppenborg, *Q Parallels*, 166, for a list of modern authors who advocate against a literary connection between Luke and Matthew’s versions of the parable. See also Blomberg, *Parables*, 237-239; Hultgren, *Parables*, 333-335; Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom*, 119; and France, *Matthew*, 821-22. Smit cautiously advocates for the independence of the parables in Matt, Luke, and *Gos. Thom.* based on several considerations, “The two problems making a certain attribution to Q difficult are the small amount of verb agreements between the two versions and the uncertainty of the position of the saying in Q. Both weaknesses are admitted by some arguing in favor of Q-provenance. Even though the IQP includes the parable in its reconstruction of the sayings source, the question of Q-provenance is answered with a cautious ‘no’ here in favor of the assumption of a different, probably oral, tradition to which both Lk., Mt. and the *Gos. Thom.* had access.” Smit, *Fellowship and Food*, 158-159.

vocabulary seem to indicate distinct traditions and parables, though their theme is much the same. In my judgment, one theme is addressed and the same basic idea is taught, but the variations reflect Jesus' development of the idea in his ministry on distinct occasions.⁵⁷

Let's take a look at some of the differences that Bock appeals to in his conclusion.

When compared to the parable of the Great Banquet, the parable of the Wedding Feast shows considerable evidence of Matthean influence and redaction.⁵⁸ The first and very obvious sign of Matthew's influence is the introductory formula: "The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son" (ὁμοιώθη ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν ἀνθρώπῳ βασιλεῖ, ὅστις ἐποίησεν γάμους τῷ υἱῷ αὐτοῦ).⁵⁹ As in Luke and the *Gos. Thom.*, the banquet-giver is a man. But Matthew adds another noun in apposition to complete his description: ἀνθρώπῳ βασιλεῖ (literally: "to a man, a king").⁶⁰ Furthermore, in Matthew the banquet is a wedding feast (γάμος) for a son, appealing to the imagery of the eschatological banquet (cf. Matt 25:10; Luke 12:46; 14:8; Rev 19:7, 9).⁶¹ The introduction of the king and his son harken the reader back to the allegory of the parable of the Tenants where the son, representing Jesus Christ, was thrown outside the vineyard and killed (22:39) by the wicked tenants.⁶² Furthermore, the soon-to-be-married son reminds the reader of Jesus, who Matthew has already identified as the eschatological bridegroom (Matt 9:15; cf. 25:1-3).⁶³ Through the introduction of the king (versus Luke's "a certain man" or ἄνθρωπός τις" in 14:16), Matthew simply clarifies the allegorical

⁵⁷ Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1270.

⁵⁸ Scott, *Hear Then a Parable*, 162, notes, "Nearly every commentator agrees on the secondary character of the Matthean performance of this parable. Matthew's own concerns are evident throughout."

⁵⁹ James M. Robinson, *et al.*, eds. *The Critical Edition of Q*, 432, claim that 22:1 is Matthean in origin.

⁶⁰ Smit, *Fellowship and Food*, 356, reasons that Luke and *Thomas*' "man" are closer to the original source than Matthew's "king."

⁶¹ Davies and Allison, *Matthew XIX-XXVIII*, 195.

⁶² Weren, "From Q to Matthew 22,1-14," 666-667.

⁶³ Hultgren, *Parables*, 343.

identity of the banquet giver who more subtly represents God in Luke.⁶⁴ Matthew further expands the description of the banquet in 22:4 (“My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered”). However, the unmistakable allegorical references in v. 4 (and v. 8) to the *Parousia* (“everything is ready [ἐτοιμάζω]”) also appear in Luke (14:16: “everything is now ready [ἔτοιμος]”).⁶⁵ The unexpected mistreatment and killing of the servants in 22:6 are Matthean additions which again connect to the preceding parable of the Tenants where “the tenants seized his [the householder’s] servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third [21:35].”⁶⁶ The destruction of the city of the first invitees while the banquet literally “sits on the table” is also an allegorical Matthean addition referring to the sacking of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 which we will discuss in more detail below.⁶⁷

Of course, the most substantial Matthean addition is a separate parable in 22:11-14 which Matthew has appended as a conclusion for the Wedding Feast. This parable, which we will call the parable of the *Wedding Garment*, will be treated in detail below. In content, the parable of 22:11-14 is an allegorical treatment of the Final Judgment and originates from Matthew himself or his special source.⁶⁸ The rationale for this supposition is the unique Matthean language⁶⁹ of

⁶⁴ Roger Sullivan notes, “The host is understood to be God. The supper is the great messianic banquet that characterizes the kingdom of God and the blessings he is preparing to bestow.” Roger W. Sullivan, “The Parable of the Great Supper,” *TTE* 57 (1997), 63-64.

⁶⁵ For the eschatological significance of ἔτοιμος, ἐτοιμάζω, and ἐτοίμως see Matt 24:44 and 25:10 (cf. Luke 12:40, 47; 1 Pet 1:5; 4:5; Rev 19:7). See also Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom*, 120-121.

⁶⁶ Davies and Allison, *Matthew XIX-XXVIII*, 197.

⁶⁷ Konradt, *Israel*, 200. See also Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 630.

⁶⁸ Davies and Allison, *Matthew XIX-XXVIII*, 194.

⁶⁹ Compare the fate of the guest with the soiled garment in Matt 22:13 (ἐκβάλετε αὐτὸν εἰς τὸ σκότος τὸ ἐξώτερον· ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων) to the fate of the “sons of the kingdom” in 8:12 (εἰς τὸ σκότος τὸ ἐξώτερον· ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων). See Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 627-628.

the Wedding Garment parable in v. 13 and the change in the terminology for the servants from δοῦλοι (“slaves”) in 22:1-10 to διακόνοι (“servants”) in vv. 11-14.⁷⁰

In short, all of the changes mentioned above show that Matthew envisions the parable of the Wedding Feast to be an allegory of salvation history. Madeline Boucher nicely summarizes this point, “Matthew has so edited this parable as to present it as a schematic outline of the history of salvation embracing the Israelite prophets, the Christian missionaries, the fall of Jerusalem, and the messianic banquet in the new age.”⁷¹

While scholars consider the parable of the Wedding Feast to be heavily influenced by Matthew, Luke’s parable of the Great Banquet seems to be closer to his original source with fewer modifications.⁷² Two pieces of evidence show that 14:15 (“When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, ‘Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God’”) is a Lukan modification.⁷³ First, this verse, which is absent in Matthew and *Gos. Thom.*, connects the parable of the Great Banquet to the preceding discussion of feasting (14:1-14).⁷⁴ Second, 14:15 sets the stage for the development of Luke’s parable into an allegory of the eschatological banquet (under the influence of v.14: “You will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous”).⁷⁵ Luke’s most substantial addition is his third invitation in 14:22-23. Of these verses Darrell Bock writes, “The third invitation to outsiders is lacking in Matt. 22 and is perhaps

⁷⁰ Jeremias, *Parables*, 65

⁷¹ Madeleine Boucher, *The Parables* (Wilmington, Del.: Michael Glazier, 1981), 104.

⁷² Weren, “From Q to Matthew 22,1-14,” 667.

⁷³ Smit, *Fellowship and Food*, 156, concludes, “It is probably preferable to consider the verse [14:15] as Lk. redaction.”

⁷⁴ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, 1052.

⁷⁵ Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Last Days*, 121.

another evidence of independence.”⁷⁶ Luke’s third invitation is crucial to the motif of Gentile inclusion in Great Banquet and will be treated later.

In reflecting on the additions to the parable of the Great Banquet, Luke’s preoccupation in v. 21 with the “poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame” (τοὺς πτωχοὺς καὶ ἀναπεῖρους καὶ τυφλοὺς καὶ χωλοὺς) presents itself. While concern for “least in Israel” (in addition to the Gentiles) is a theme throughout Luke-Acts, in 13:22-14:35 that concern comes to full expression.⁷⁷ It is not surprising, then, to find an exact repetition of 14:13 (κάλει πτωχοὺς, ἀναπεῖρους, χωλοὺς, τυφλοὺς) in 14:21.⁷⁸ In the end, the additions to the Great Banquet parable show that although there was also an interest in developing a salvation-history allegory of eschatological banquet (like Matthew), Luke has paid more attention to the marginalized of Israel (cf. Matthew’s offhand reference to the “bad and the good” in 22:10) and somewhat less to the judgment of those who would reject the invitations (though 14:24 does have a harsh ring).⁷⁹

In simplicity, brevity, and organization, the *Gos. Thom.* 64 resembles a more original form of the Great Banquet/Wedding Feast parable.⁸⁰ However, the *Gos. Thom.* has dramatically altered the original parable’s message to support the anti-commercial attitude prevalent in logia 63-65.⁸¹

⁷⁶ Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1277. *Contra* Bock’s declaration, Matt does in fact have three invitations (22:3; 22:4 and 22:9). In fact, Matthew’s third invitation is to outsiders as well—those in the *thoroughfares* (διέξοδοι) leading out of the city. The difference is that in Matt the first two invitations are rejected while in Luke only the first is rejected.

⁷⁷ Marshall writes, “Throughout this section it has become apparent that Jesus’ concern was for the outcasts of Jewish society (with this hint of future openness also to the Gentiles).” Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, 136.

⁷⁸ Story, “One Banquet,” 87, notes, “The meal is to be shared with all, including the unfortunate and outcasts.”

⁷⁹ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, 1053.

⁸⁰ Weren, “From Q to Matthew 22,1-14,” 667. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, 1051, notes, “In my opinion, one should regard the form of the parable in the *Gospel of Thomas* as more primitive and closer to what might have come from the lips of Jesus himself in Stage I of the gospel tradition.”

⁸¹ Gathercole, *The Gospel of Thomas*, 454, writes, “This is the second of a trio of parables (GTh 63-65) pronouncing against the evils of commerce and its incompatibility with true discipleship. The guests had initially intended to attend the banquet . . . but were prevented from doing so because of their commercial activities.”

In fact three out of four of the excuses the invitees present (e.g., pursuing claims against merchants, inspecting a newly-purchased house, and collecting rent) reflect commercial concerns.⁸² *Thomas*' third excuse, preparing a banquet for a newly married friend, which resembles Luke 14:20,⁸³ is negative since *Gos. Thom.* has a rather low view of women and marriage.⁸⁴ In addition, the oral stage prefers triadic formulas (such as Luke's three invitations and three excuses as opposed to *Thomas*' four). This suggests that *Gos. Thom.* has added a fourth excuse to the three present in his tradition.⁸⁵ Given *Thomas*' anti-merchant polemic, the first excuse (i.e., the claims against merchants) seems most to resemble an editorial addition.

In addition, the closing declaration of the *Thomassine* parable, "Businessmen and merchants will not enter the places of my father," is rather wide of the mark set by the similar conclusions of Matthew (22:14) and Luke (14:24). *Thomas*' final declaration comports with the gnosticizing belief that commerce leads the soul away from spiritual contemplation, "Les acheteurs et les marchands, c'est-à-dire ceux qui n'ont pas pratiqué la pauvreté ne participeront pas au repos céleste."⁸⁶ Thus, many commentators see in *Thomas*' closing statement a distinctly gnostic

⁸² Scott, *Hear Then a Parable*, 165, states, "As the concluding logion makes evident, *Thomas* also understands the banquet to be the messianic banquet. But in contrast to the Synoptics, here the structural emphasis falls on those who reject the invitation . . . Three of the four excuses show businessmen conducting their commerce. The point is not just that these are more urban in comparison with Luke but that these are businessmen and merchants, not farmers . . . The parable in *Thomas* becomes an exhortation against the affairs of business and a life of gain."

⁸³ The third excuse, at least in the Lukan form, may have been persuasive since according to Deuteronomy 20:7 a man pledged to be married may be released from the requirements of fighting the holy war alongside his fellow Israelites. However, it is hard to see how attending a banquet (i.e., Luke 14:20) relates to holy war. Furthermore, *Thomas*' excuse is for *preparing* a wedding banquet and not actually getting married. See Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1275.

⁸⁴ Ménard, *L'Évangile selon Thomas*, 165, notes, "La troisième excuse du mariage paraît de mauvaise venue, bien que Thomas soit nettement contre la femme (log. 15, 22, 46, 79, 114). La conclusion va dans le même sens."

⁸⁵ Ménard, *L'Évangile selon Thomas*, 167.

⁸⁶ Ménard, *L'Évangile selon Thomas*, 164.

perspective.⁸⁷ In simplicity and structure, *Gos. Thom.* provides insight into a more original form of the parable. With regard to the message, however, *Gos. Thom.* shows the heavy external influence of the redactor's perspective.

Based on the differences presented above, many consider the versions of the parable of the Great Banquet/Wedding Feast to be unrelated. Before drawing some conclusions with regard to our main argument about delay and Gentile inclusion in the Wedding Feast/Great Banquet, we must briefly analyze evidence suggesting that these different versions of the parable share a common source.

B. Evidence that the Parable of the Wedding Feast (Matthew) and the Parable of the Great Banquet (Luke and *Gos. Thom.*) Share a Common Source (Q)

It is undeniable that significant differences exist between the parable of the Wedding Feast in Matthew and the Great Banquet in Luke and the *Gos. Thom.* However, our study argues that behind these differences, Luke and Matthew have drawn upon a common source (Q).⁸⁸ Differences, even the significant modifications that we noted above, are often attributable⁸⁹ to the unique theological and literary emphases of the Gospel writers who substantially altered the sources and traditions which they received even while preserving many of the key details and

⁸⁷ Hultgren, *Parables*, 335-336, notes, "The parable [*Gos. Thom.*] closes with a comment against persons engaged in commerce. Buying and selling lead persons astray; commerce is incompatible with the contemplative life required of the true Gnostic."

⁸⁸ See John Kloppenborg, *The Formation of Q: Trajectories in Ancient Wisdom Collections* (SAC; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 228. See also Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 627-628 and Story, "All Is Know Ready," 68-69. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, 1052, writes, "Because of the relation of the parable forms in the Gospel of Thomas and in Luke, I prefer to think that both the Matthean and Lucan forms are derived in the main from "Q," the bulk of the Lucan form (vv. 16-21) corresponds sufficiently to Matt. 22:2-10 to warrant this." Some authors suggest that Matt and Luke are following different traditions of the same story. See Dodd, *The Parables*, 121.

⁸⁹ Of course, differences can also be attributable to the fact that outwardly similar parables arise from completely different traditions as well. In the end little can be said for certain with regard to literary relationships amongst the parables except for tentative conclusions based on the overall weight of the evidence.

emphases of these them.⁹⁰ In fact, it is exactly this scenario which gave rise to the striking similarities and vexing differences between the Lukan, Matthean, and *Thomassine* versions of our parable.⁹¹ The goal of this section is to develop a *rough outline* of the common source that Matthew, Luke, and the *Gos. Thom.* utilized in the development of their versions of the parable of the Great Banquet/Wedding Feast.⁹² If we successfully delineate such an outline, we can use it to show how Matthew and Luke adapted their versions of the parable to address two pressing theological and sociological challenges faced by both their communities: the lengthening period after Easter and an ever increasing presence of Gentiles in the early Christian community.

Figure 2: Similarities in the Parables of the Wedding Feast and Great Banquet		
Parable of the Wedding Feast Matt 22:1-14	Parable of the Great Banquet Luke 14:15-23	Parable of the Great Banquet <i>Gos. Thom.</i> 64
The man character is a man (ἄνθρωπος βασιλεύς) who happens to be a king.	The main character is a man (ἄνθρωπος).	The main character is a man.
The main event is a banquet for a wedding (ἐποίησεν γάμους).	The main event is a banquet (ἐποίει δεῖπνον μέγα).	The main event is a banquet.
After the initial invitation, the guests were called (καλέω) three times (the first two callings were rejected).	After the initial invitation (καλέω), the guests were called three times (the first calling was rejected).	Guests were invited four times (all four rejected).
Servants (δούλοι) were sent to call (καλέω) the invitees (κεκλημένοι).	A servant (δοῦλος) was sent to call the invitees (κεκλημένοι).	A servant was sent to the invitees.
The banquet was ready (ἐτοιμάζω/ ἔτοιμος).	The banquet was ready (ἔτοιμος).	
The invitees refused to come.	The invitees refused to come.	The invitees refused to come.
One invitee went to his field (ἀγρός).	One invitee asked to be excused to examine a recently purchased field (ἀγρός).	One invitee refused because he was going to press his claims on merchants.
One invitee went about his business (ἐμπορία).	One invitee asked to be excused to see oxen recently purchased (ἀγοράζω).	One invitee refused because he was going to see the house he recently purchased.

⁹⁰ Weren, "From Q to Matthew 22,1-14," 662, notes that the differences between Q and Luke can be attributed to the redactional influence of Luke. However, Weren suggests that Matthew used an older tradition of Q than the one possessed by Luke.

⁹¹ Konradt, *Israel*, 194, assumes a common source behind Matt and Luke's parable and uses that to distill the unique Matthean flavor of the parable of the Wedding Feast.

⁹² See J. Lyle Story, "All Is Now Ready," 73, for an excellent list of common elements in the parables.

	One invitee asked to be excused because he was getting married.	One invitee refused because he was preparing a wedding banquet. A fourth invitee refused because he was on his way to collect rent from a farm.
	The servant reports to his master.	The servant reports to his master.
The king was angry (ὀργίζομαι).	The householder was angry (ὀργίζομαι).	
The servants (δούλοι) are ordered to go to the “outlet roads” (τὰς διεξόδους τῶν ὁδῶν) of the city.	The servant (δοῦλος) is ordered to go out to the “streets and the alleys” (πλατείας καὶ ῥύμας) of the city.	The servant is ordered to go out into the streets.
The servants are told to invite to whomever they find (ὅσους εἶναι εὔρητε), both the bad and the good.	The servant is told to issue invitations to the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.	The servant is told to issue invitations to anyone he happens to meet.
The hall was full (πῖμπλημι).	The house was full (γεμίζω).	
Final saying of judgment: “For many are invited, but few are chosen.”	Final saying of judgment: “Not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.”	Final saying of judgment: “Businessmen and merchants will not enter the places of my father.”

The basis for any argument that the versions of the parable of the Banquet/Wedding Feast in Luke and Matthew share a common source are the many significant similarities between the versions. A brief reflection on figure 2 above shows that there are many *conceptual* and *verbal* similarities between the parables of the Wedding Feast and the Great Banquet.⁹³ The following is a summary of these conceptual and verbal similarities with a special focus on Matthew and Luke (verbal similarities are numbered): the banquet-giver is **(1) a man** (ἄνθρωπος) who **(2) sends** (ἀποστέλλω) his **(3) servant(s)** (δοῦλος) to **(4) call** (καλέω) the **(5) invited**⁹⁴ (κεκλημένοι) to the banquet that is **(6) ready** (ἔτοιμος). The invitees reject the summons, instead going to **(7) the**

⁹³ Weren, “From Q to Matthew 22,1-14,” 664, notes, “That the two passages [from Matthew and Luke] are related appears from the fact that, on the whole, they are structured in the same way. They have the same basic pattern that we also encounter in GT. The parable consists of three parts: a) the opening situation is that someone invites the guests for a festive meal; b) a crisis arises because the guests do not show up; c) the crisis is overcome by the host’s order to invite other people.” See counter-evidence in Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1270.

⁹⁴ The use of the perfect participle in Matt 22:3 indicates that a preliminary invitation had already been issued to the invitees as the Lukan parable states (Luke 14:16: “A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests”). See France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 821-822.

field (ἀγρός) and other activities (such as a wedding),⁹⁵ making the banquet-giver **(8) angry** (ὀργίζομαι). In response, the banquet-giver sends out the **(9) servant(s)** (δοῦλος) to gather the poor, unclean and infirm and **(10) lead** (συνάγω/εἰσάγω) them to the banquet until it is full. At the end of the parable, the original **(11) invitees** (κλητοί/ κεκλημένοι) are excluded by means of a solemn declaration of judgment.

The many fundamental similarities between the versions of the parable of the Great Banquet/Wedding Feast suggest the existence of a shared underlying source. We have already shown in the previous section that the differences between Matthew, Luke, and *Thomas*' versions of the parable can be explained by appealing to the editorial hand of the Evangelists who incorporated the shared source (Q) which they received into their respective Gospels according to their own theological and literary foci.⁹⁶ For this reason, there is no need to appeal to separate sources and traditions to explain the differences between the versions of our parable.⁹⁷

Based on our conceptual and verbal analysis above, we have identified *eleven* verbal similarities and many more conceptual ones. Furthermore, there is a basic structural similarity to the parable as it occurs in Matthew, Luke, and the *Gos. Thom.* as we will describe below.⁹⁸ Thus,

⁹⁵ Luke and *Gos. Thom.* agree that a wedding was amongst these activities. Many commentators argue that the original source probably contained three excuses. Scott, *Hear Then a Parable*, 167, writes, "Matthew and Luke have three excuses; *Gos. Thom.* has four. Since in *Gos. Thom.* the accent falls on the excuses, the number of excuses in *Gos. Thom.* is secondary. Further, orality prefers a triadic pattern. So most likely there were originally three excuses . . . Luke's performance is closer to the parable's originating structure."

⁹⁶ Kloppenborg, *Q Parallels*, 166, who argues that the parable exists in Q, notes, "Those who argue for its inclusion point out, however, that there are some verbal agreements and a basic agreement in plot, and account for the differences by appeal to the tendency of Luke and especially Matthew to edit parables."

⁹⁷ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, 1052.

⁹⁸ Weren, "From Q to Matthew 22,1-14," 663-664, notes, "The supposition that the parable was already present in Q rests on the similarities between the Greek text of Mt 22,1-10 and Lk 14,16-24. The two versions contain terms that partly or entirely match . . . That the two passages are related also appears from the fact that, on the whole, they are structured in the same way."

a rough outline of the common source of the parable of the Great Banquet/Wedding feast emerges. In large measure, this outline reflects the full-orbed reconstruction of Q by Robinson, *et. al.*⁹⁹ At the core of the parable is a master or householder who invites a group of “invitees” (κεκλημένοι) to a banquet and is greatly dishonored by their rejection of his invitation.¹⁰⁰ In anger, he invites the “excluded,” a group in which Matthew and Luke count the poor, sick, and Gentiles whom we will discuss below. Finally, in a solemn declaration, the “invitees” become the “excluded.” Eugene Lemcio captures the meaning of the source shared by Matthew (Wedding Feast) and Luke (Great Banquet) well,

At one extreme are members of the ‘establishment’ (i.e., all who have already been included in the community of faith because they have responded to an historical call or invitation to God’s end-time salvation). Nevertheless, from their privileged position, they refuse to heed his immediate summons to that occasion. At the opposite pole are those on the periphery of the community who have become excluded from the benefits of the initial invitation for religious reasons. Physical disability, economic poverty, contrary morality and ethnic diversity are alleged evidences of God’s judgment and rejection. However in such circumstances they become the special subjects of God’s aggressive, universal graciousness. Insiders and outsiders trade places.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Robinson, *et al.*, ed. *The Critical Edition of Q*, 432-444, offers the following reconstruction of the Q parable of the Wedding Feast/Great Banquet. Portions of text which are less certain to have existed in Q according to Robinson, *et al.* are in *italics*. “A certain person [ἄνθρωπος] prepared a dinner [δεῖπνον], and invited [καλέω] many. And he sent his slave [δοῦλος] at the time of the dinner to say to the invited [κεκλημένοι]: Come, for it is now ready [ἔτοιμος]. *One declined because of his farm [ἀγρός]. Another declined because of his business.* And the slave went away. He said these things to his master. Then the householder, enraged [ὀργίζομαι], said to his slave, ‘Go out on the roads [ὁδός], and whomever you find, invite [καλέω], so that my house may be filled [γεμίζω].’ However, on pages 436-437 Robinson, *et al.* are unsure about whether the excuses ever existed in Q. In contrast, Weren, “From Q to Matthew 22,1-14,” 673, provides a reconstruction of Q that substantially follows the Lukan text of the three excuses including the purchase of a farm, five head of oxen, and a recent marriage.

¹⁰⁰ Scott, *Hear Then a Parable*, 170-171.

¹⁰¹ Eugene Lemcio, “The Parables of the Great Supper and the Wedding Feast: History, Redaction, and Canon,” *HBT* 8 (1986), 19-20. Weren, “From Q to Matthew 22,1-14,” 673, substantially agrees with Lemcio’s analysis, “What was the meaning of the Q parable? In answering this question, I choose my starting point in the fact that the story goes against the expectations of the recipients in two ways. The first unexpected incident is that all friends and acquaintances of the host let their own interests prevail over the wish of the host to see them appear at his table. Their negative reaction is a direct insult to the host. The second unanticipated element is that this man stakes his already damaged reputation by surrounding himself with strangers, for whom the feast was not originally intended.”

Now that we have uncovered a common source behind the parable of the Wedding Feast/Great Banquet and reflected on its meaning, we will show how the motifs of delay of the *Parousia* and Gentile inclusion manifest themselves in the Matthean and Lukan redaction of the parable.

C. Delay of the *Parousia* and Gentile Inclusion in the Matthean and Lukan Redaction of the Parable of the Wedding Feast/Great Banquet

Based on our analysis of the common source above, we can identify four unique Matthean and Lukan additions to the parable of the Wedding Feast/Great Banquet that appeal to the motifs of the delay of the *Parousia* and/or Gentile Inclusion. First, Luke's multiple invitations after the rejection of the first group of invitees in 14:21-23 is a reference to the delay and Gentile inclusion.¹⁰² Second, Matthew's expansion of the allegory to include a king, a son, multiple servants, and a wedding feast embraces the concepts of Gentile inclusion and delay. Third, the Matthean addition of the parable of the Wedding Garment refers to Gentile inclusion. Fourth, Matthew's account of the persecution of the servants and the sacking of the "city" are references to Gentile inclusion and the *Parousia*'s delay.

We will discuss these four unique additions to the shared source of the Wedding Feast/Great Banquet parable under the section below entitled, "Challenges of Interpretation." However, before this discussion, we need to lay further groundwork for our argument by briefly touching on the context and organization of our parables.

III. The Context of the Parable of the Wedding Feast/Great Banquet in Matthew and Luke

¹⁰² In oral traditions, triads are common elements in a narrative. See Scott, *Hear Then a Parable*, 167. In the case of Luke's threefold invitation, the framework suggests uniquely Lukan concerns. The first invitation to the "inside group," the second to the "marginalized of Israel" and the third to the "highways and hedges" outside the city where the Gentiles would be found. In essence, Luke has a "to the Jews first, then to the Gentiles" framework. Davies and Allison write, "The duplication of the final invitation (contrast Gos. Thom. 65 and Matthew) results in a transparent picture of the early Christian mission as depicted in Luke-Acts—first to the Jews, then to the Gentiles." Davies and Allison, *Matthew XIX-XXVIII*, 196.

In terms of their placement in the larger narratives of Matthew and Luke, the contexts of the versions of the parable of the Wedding Feast/Great Banquet are quite different. In Matthew, the parable of the Wedding Feast is part of Jesus' disputation with the religious authorities (21:23) after his entry into Jerusalem (21:1-11) and his prophetic action at the Temple/Fig Tree (21:11-22). In contrast, the parable of the Great Banquet in Luke is part of the narrative of Jesus' travel to Jerusalem (9:51-19:57), sometimes called the "Travel Narrative"¹⁰³ or "Central Section."¹⁰⁴ Thus, for Luke, Jesus has not yet arrived in Jerusalem when he tells the parable of the Great Banquet.¹⁰⁵ In Matthew's Gospel, however, Jesus tells the parable in the context of the ever-heightening conflict between himself and the Jewish leadership in Jerusalem which soon results in his Passion.

Despite the different narrative placement of the parable of Great Banquet/Wedding Feast, opposition and rejection of Jesus by the Jewish leadership is a large part of the context in Luke and Matthew. In Matthew, the parable of the Wedding Feast is the final element of a triad of parables (i.e., the parable of the Two Sons [21:28-32], Tenants [21:33-46], and the Wedding Feast [22:1-14]). At the conclusion of the first in the triad of parables, Jesus proclaims to the chief priests and elders (symbolized by the second son) that "the tax collectors and the prostitutes" (symbolized by the first son) are entering into the Kingdom of God ahead of them (21:28-32). This declaration indicates a preference for the "excluded" (i.e., ritually and religiously impure) of Israel echoing Matthew's declaration in the final invitation of the

¹⁰³ See Simon Kistemaker, "The Structure of Luke's Gospel," *JETS* 25.1 (1982), 33-39.

¹⁰⁴ Drury, *Tradition and Design in Luke's Gospel*, 183.

¹⁰⁵ Lemcio, "The Parables of the Great Supper and Wedding Feast," 5.

Wedding Feast (i.e., the servants gathered “the *bad* and good”).¹⁰⁶ In the second parable (the allegory of the Tenants), Jesus’ Jewish opponents (the chief priests and Pharisees in 21:45) realize he is equating them with the wicked tenants (21:45) who killed the land-owner’s son and his servants. According to Jesus, the Kingdom of God “will be taken away” from his opponents and given to “a people” (ἔθνος) who “produce its fruit” (21:43). At minimum, ἔθνος suggests the creation of a new people of God, made up of Jews and Gentiles.¹⁰⁷ Thus, in the second element of the triad of parables, Matthew argues that the “insider” group of Jewish leaders will lose their place in the kingdom to both Gentiles and Jews who “produce fruit” (cf. 22:14).¹⁰⁸ Regarding the third parable, the Wedding Feast, Davies and Allison note that “the final parable in this closely interrelated sequence of three parables (beginning in 21:28) speaks again concerning the lack of response among the Jews to Jesus and his message.”¹⁰⁹

Immediately after the parable of the Wedding Feast, the conflict between Jesus and his opponents amplifies. In 22:15-22 the Pharisees and Herodians attempt to trap Jesus in his words with a question regarding taxation, followed in 22:23-33 by a controversy with the Sadducees about the resurrection.¹¹⁰ Finally, the conflict reaches its climax as Jesus castigates the “teachers of the law and the Pharisees” in the “woes” of ch. 23. In the context of Matthew, Jewish

¹⁰⁶ Hultgren, *Parables*, 343.

¹⁰⁷ Balabanski, *Eschatology in the Making*, 178.

¹⁰⁸ France, *Matthew*, 827-828.

¹⁰⁹ Davies and Allison, *Matthew XIX-XXVIII*, 626-627. Story, “All Is Now Ready,” 71, writes, “This literary structure of the trilogy of parables can be considered as a theological unit which elucidates the rejection/acceptance motif, while portraying the consequences of both responses.”

¹¹⁰ Matt reports in 22:15, “Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words.”

opposition and references to the inclusion of more receptive people (including Gentiles), are keys to the context of the parable of the Wedding Feast.¹¹¹

The context of Luke is quite similar with regard to the ongoing conflict between Jesus and the Jewish leadership. In Luke 14, however, this conflict instead occurs in the context of a feast held at the home of a prominent Pharisee. As we mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the parable of the Great Banquet represents a portion of Luke's chapter on Jesus' table-fellowship (beginning in 14:1) which resembles a Hellenistic symposium between a philosopher (Jesus) and his interlocutors (the Pharisees).¹¹² The previous chapter concludes with Jesus' saying about Jerusalem, "the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it" (Luke 13:31-35). When Jesus arrives at a banquet at the house of a prominent religious functionary (14:1), the conflict deepens as he silences his fellow guests, the Pharisees, who were complaining about his healing of a man with dropsy on the Sabbath (14:2-6).¹¹³ Thus, it is apparent in the Lukan "symposium" of chapter fourteen that significant conflict exists between Jesus, the banquet host, and the other guests.¹¹⁴ Jesus then continues his criticism of his fellow-guests who were scurrying after the best seats (14:7-11). Finally, in vs. 12-13, Jesus addresses the host directly, encouraging him to invite "the poor, the crippled, the lame and the blind" to his

¹¹¹ Story, "All Is Now Ready," 67, "Context and parable alike announce Jewish rejection and Gentile acceptance of the Kingdom, 'The Kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing the fruits of it' (21:43) . . . The issue in Matthew is *ethnic*—one people replacing another, or at least, preceding another in the Kingdom of God (21:31, 43)."

¹¹² Smith, "Table Fellowship in Luke," 621, writes, "Thus, chap. 14 is a highly structured literary unit with clear reference to the symposium genre. This point has been made in a study by X. de Meeûs. He points out, for example, the structured nature of the chapter. That is, Jesus addresses successively the group of guests as a whole (14:7), the master of the house (14:12), and one of the guests who asks a question (14:15). These give the chapter a dialogue style similar to that of the symposium genre. In addition, Luke includes characters that are typically included in the genre: the master of the house, the guest of honor and main speaker, the invited guests (14:7), the uninvited (14:13, 24, 25; 15:1-2)."

¹¹³ Story, "All Is Now Ready," 68.

¹¹⁴ Smith, "Table Fellowship in Luke," 622.

banquets instead of the social and religious elite so that he will be repaid at the “resurrection of the righteous.”¹¹⁵ The mention of the Resurrection in v. 14 gives the parable of the Great Banquet its eschatological flavor and prefaces its introduction in 14:15.¹¹⁶

The dispute between Jesus and the Pharisees continues in 15:1-2, which is the occasion for three parables about lost things (a sheep, a coin and a son).¹¹⁷ The Lukan context of the parable of the Great Banquet is different than Matthew’s, especially with regard to the focus on the “excluded” poor, crippled, lame, and blind (14:13, 21). However, like Matthew, Jesus’ rejection by the Jewish leadership in Luke figures importantly in the context, setting the stage for later references to Gentile inclusion. Furthermore, the mention of the resurrection and eschatological banquet bring the delay of the *Parousia* to the readers’ minds.¹¹⁸

The observation that the Jewish leadership rejects Jesus in the narrative context of the Great Banquet/Wedding Feast parable raises an important question. Is it just the *leadership* of Israel which rejects Jesus in these surrounding narratives? Or does this rejection point toward a fundamental conflict between Matthew and Luke’s faith communities and first century Jewish movements more broadly? This is an important question as the established pattern of *rejection* of

¹¹⁵ In *Parables*, 178-179, Joachim Jeremias tells the rabbinical parable of Bar-Maayan, a corrupt tax-collector whose death the people lament more than that of a righteous man because he invited the poor to banquet when those originally invited had refused to come. See also Luise Schottroff, *The Parables of Jesus* (trans. Linda Maloney; Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2006), 51; trans. of *Die Gleichnisse Jesu* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2005).

¹¹⁶ Fitzmyer, *Luke X-XXIV*, 1049.

¹¹⁷ Luke 15:1-2: “Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, ‘This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.’”

¹¹⁸ Scott, *Hear Then a Parable*, writes, “If the Matthean performance is low in verisimilitude, Luke’s is so realistic, its context so true, that commentators have simply assumed that Luke has correctly preserved the parable, with only a slight allegory separating him from Jesus. Luke normally circumscribes the meaning for his performance by contextualization, as in Chapter 15. The themes of the poor and the delay of the *Parousia* coalesce in the parable and in context.”

one group and *inclusion* of another is central to the Great Banquet/Wedding Feast parable and its context.

There is evidence in the context of the parable of the Great Banquet/Wedding Feast that the Jewish leaders' rejection of Jesus symbolized for Matthew and Luke the rejection of Israel more broadly.¹¹⁹ In Chapter Three we discussed the nature of this conflict between the early Christian movement and many in first century Judaism. In short, the primary conflict was christological, a dispute over the identity and vocation of the Messiah whom the early Christians identified as Jesus of Nazareth.¹²⁰ However, there were several other loci, such as the role of *Torah*, the theology of the Temple, and the identity of the chosen people.¹²¹ While this conflict obviously produced antagonism on both sides (see Chapter Three), the fact that Matthew and Luke make so many references to it suggests that the early Christian community still had significant interaction with elements of first century Judaism when they wrote their Gospels. The conflict appearing in the context of the parable of the Wedding Feast/Great Banquet illustrates the need felt by the early Jewish-Christian movement to claim its identity as the true people of God over against elements in wider first century Judaism which would deny it. Thus, the conflict represented in the parable of the Great Banquet/Wedding Feast does not represent the wholesale rejection of

¹¹⁹ Allen Martens, "'Produce Fruit Worthy of Repentance': Parables of Judgment against the Jewish Religious Leaders and the Nation," in *The Challenge of Jesus' Parables* (ed. Richard Longenecker; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 152-153. Konradt, *Israel*, 197, argues that it is exclusively the Jewish religious elite that reject the invitation in the Matthew's parable of the Wedding Feast. For this reason, the invitation goes out to "the common people" of Israel.

¹²⁰ Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins*, 620. "For the majority of Jews, even the Christology contained in the New Testament was clearly unacceptable, not only because such a belief was unusual, but also because the whole cosmic drama of Christ and the superhuman nature of the task of Christ was in disharmony with the Jewish belief in the God who is One and whose name is One." See also Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways*, xxvi.

¹²¹ Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways*, 24-26.

Jesus by all elements of Israel.¹²² Rather it represents the early Christian community's efforts to claim an identity continuous with Israel.

Allen Martens provides several pieces of evidence from Matthew for this broad conflict: (1) the controversy section of 21:23 to 22:46 presents Jewish leaders as representatives of the nation; (2) the cursing of the Temple and Fig Tree (21:12-22) have national significance since the Temple "is the heart of the nation's cultus and the nation's consciousness," and (3) the reference to the "kingdom" being given to another "people" in 21:43 and the destruction of the "city" in 22:6 (which represents Jerusalem).¹²³ From the Lukan perspective, the chapter preceding our parable is rife with allusions to the conflict between Jesus, the Jewish leadership, and Israel more broadly as seen in the parable of the Unproductive Tree in the Vineyard (Luke 13:6-9), the disputed Sabbath healing (13:10-17), the parable of the Shut Door with the "East/West" saying (13:22-30), and Jesus' prophecy of Jerusalem's destruction (13:31-35).

To all of this evidence that Matthew and Luke saw the conflict more broadly, we note that it is natural from the perspective of these ancient texts for leaders to represent the entire nation.¹²⁴ For example, the patriarch Jacob represents the nation of Israel (e.g., Gen 32:28). The Aaronic Priesthood represented Israel before YHWH in the cult (e.g., Lev 16). The concept of representation of a nation by its leader(s) comes to expression both in the context of blessing (e.g., Abraham's descendants are blessed through him in Gen 12:1-5) and in judgment (e.g., David's census of Israel's fighting men brings judgment on all Israel in 1 Chr 21). Thus, in its

¹²² Konradt, *Israel*, 198-199, writes, "The parable is precisely not an expression of a completely failed mission to Israel."

¹²³ Allen Martens, "Produce Fruit Worthy of Repentance," 152-154.

¹²⁴ "There is a strong sense in Scripture that certain leaders represent a nation, and the focus is generally upon Israel." Leland Ryken, James Wilhoit, Tremper Longman III, eds., "Leadership," in *The Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downer's Grove, Ill.: Intervarsity, 1998), 496.

Matthean and Lukan context, the parable of the Great Banquet/Wedding Feast demonstrates an ongoing dispute about Jesus' identity between the early Christian communities, the Evangelists who represented them, and other competing movements within first century Judaism. However, from the perspective of the Evangelists, let alone Q itself, our parable does not suggest that all Jews rejected Jesus or that there was no place for ethnic Israel in the early Christian community.¹²⁵ Jews in early Christian community, like the Essenes, viewed themselves as a *righteous remnant* within ethnic Israel as there had been throughout biblical history (e.g., Rom 11:1-6).¹²⁶ However, the context of the Great Banquet/Wedding Feast parable suggests a change from an "ethnocentric" people of God to a "non-ethnic entity" where a "universal mission is reiterated."¹²⁷

In analyzing the context of the parable of the Wedding Feast/Great Banquet, we have discovered the centrality of Jesus' rejection by many in Israel with subsequent references to Gentile inclusion. To a lesser degree, the Lukan context of the Great Banquet parable hints that eschatology and the *Parousia's* delay will be important. Now we need to make a few brief comments about the organization of the parable itself.

IV. The Organization of the Parable of the Great Banquet/Wedding Feast

In our discussion above on the redaction of the parable of the Great Banquet/Wedding Feast, we made several notes regarding the organization of the parable in Q. We noted that the triad is

¹²⁵ Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, 124.

¹²⁶ See Hartmut Stegemann, *The Library of Qumran* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 242. From Matt and Luke's point of view, the righteous remnant is symbolized in the second invitation to the poor, crippled, lame, and blind of the "town" (Luke) and the third invitation to the "bad and the good" in the "thoroughfares" which would have included both Jews and Gentiles (Matt).

¹²⁷ Davies and Allison, *Matthew XIX-XXVIII*, 207.

very important in the Q-parable and is a common feature in oral traditions.¹²⁸ Thus, in Luke and Matthew there are three “invitations” to the feast, though in Matthew the first two invitations are rejected (22:3, 4) while in Luke only the first is rejected (14:17).¹²⁹ In Luke’s Great Banquet parable, there are also three “excuses” from the invitees in 14:18, 19 and 20, compared to four in the *Gos. Thom.* 64. Though the use of threesomes was conventional, there is more to learn from this organizational pattern. First, the fact that the banquet-holder went to the trouble of three invitations “emphasizes the efforts of God to get a response and to include as many persons as possible within the kingdom.”¹³⁰ Secondly, the fact that all three responses from the first group of invitees were rejections (Luke 14:18-20) aggravates the offense to the banquet-holder.¹³¹ The organizational pattern of triads demonstrates that in the parable of the Great Banquet/Wedding Feast, we have an extremely gracious banquet-holder and extremely ungrateful and disrespectful invitees.

Looking specifically at the organization of the parable of the Great Banquet in Luke, we can discern three sections: (1) The invitation and dispatch of the herald (14:16-17); (2) the excuses of the invited (14:18-20); and (3) the response of the banquet-holder to issue new invitations to the formerly “excluded outsiders” (14:21-24).¹³² In Matthew, the parable of the Wedding Feast is divided into two segments, each beginning with an invitation and concluding with judgment.¹³³

¹²⁸ Robinson, *et al.*, eds. *The Critical Edition of Q*, 432-444, also acknowledge three invitations in the Q-version: one before the preparation of the banquet, another when the banquet was ready, and a final invitation to those in the road after the initial invitees had shunned the master’s summons. See also Scott, *Hear Then a Parable*, 167.

¹²⁹ In fact Matthew’s parable presupposes that an invitation has already issued before the action of the parable since the servants announce the readiness of the banquet to the κεκλημένοι (i.e., the “invited”) in 22:3.

¹³⁰ Hultgren, *Parables*, 345.

¹³¹ Scott, *Hear Then a Parable*, 170.

¹³² Sanders, “Ethic of Election,” 260.

¹³³ Davies and Allison, *Matthew XIX-XXVIII*, 193.

The first section is comprised of the two invitations to the original invitees, the rejection/persecution of the servants, and the destruction of the first set of invitees and their “city” (22:2-7). The second section is comprised of a third invitation, a report of its success, and the exclusion of the improperly dressed guest (22:8-14).

The organization of the parable of the Great Banquet/Wedding Feast gives the overall impression that *inclusion* and *exclusion* are core ideas. The “included group,” or the first set of invitees, exclude themselves by their dismissive and offensive reaction to the banquet’s announcement. The “excluded group,” or the poor, infirm, unclean, and the Gentiles (as we will see below), are “included” by virtue of their positive response to the invitation that the first group of invitees rejected.

V. Four Challenges of Interpretation in the Parable of the Wedding Feast/Great Banquet

In our detailed analysis of the relationship of the versions of the parable of the Great Banquet and Wedding Feast to one another, we concluded by highlighting four additions to the Q-version of the parable which are evidence of uniquely Matthean and Lukan concerns. They are (a) Luke’s framework of multiple invitations after the rejection of the first group of invitees in 14:21-23; (b) Matthew’s expansion of the basic allegory to include a king, a son, multiple servants, and a wedding feast; (c) Matthew’s addition of the parable of the Wedding Garment in 22:11-14; and (d) Matthew’s reference to the persecution of the servants and the resulting sacking of the “city.” Due to the allegorical nature of the parable, these four additions require more reflection and discernment as they are keys to our argument about the *Parousia*’s delay and Gentile inclusion.

A. Luke’s Multiple Invitations in 14:21-23

In a parable which is an obvious allegory like Luke's Great Banquet, the triple invitation stands out as something that requires reflection and close analysis.¹³⁴ We may formulate the problem as follows. It is quite clear that the original invitees (the κεκλημένοι of the first invitation in 14:16) represent those who would normally be considered the elect of Israel such as the invitees of the banquet of 14:1-14.¹³⁵ Persons of high socio-religious status would normally have been invited to banquets and symposiums for the sake of harmony and good order.¹³⁶ It is also transparent that "the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame" (14:13, 21) of the second invitation made in the city's "streets and alleys" represent the excluded and marginalized in Israel for whom Luke shows concern throughout his Gospel and Acts.¹³⁷ The inclusion of such a group comes as a shock to the Greco-Roman reader as invitees of lower and higher standing were not normally mixed.¹³⁸ But who are those in the "roads and country lanes" outside of the city in the third invitation (14:23) whom the banquet-holder's servant "compels" to come in?

¹³⁴ The allegorical significance of Luke's framework does not hinge on the three-fold invitation since threesomes were common in orality as we established above. Instead the allegorical significance lies in the description of to whom and where the invitations were made. See Hultgren, *Parables*, 245.

¹³⁵ Sanders, "Ethic of Election," 264, writes, "Luke makes it clear that Jesus is challenging the very identity of those who consider themselves *keklemenoi*. Like the classical prophets of the Old Testament, Jesus precisely raises the question of the identity of Israel and challenges assumptions concerning election."

¹³⁶ Mattias Klinghardt, "A Typology of the Community Meal" in *Meals in the Early Christian World* (ed. Dennis Smith and Hal Taussig; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 15-17.

¹³⁷ Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1271. A great example of Luke's concern for this very group is the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (16:19-31). In this parable, which is also part of the travel narrative, Lazarus (who symbolizes the righteous poor of Israel) is received to Abraham's bosom, but the rich man who neglected to show compassion according to "Moses and the Prophets" abides in *Hades*.

¹³⁸ The invitation of such persons of low socio-religious standing risked introducing chaos and disorder into a banquet and symposium. See Klinghardt, "A Typology of the Community Meal," 15, who writes, "Seemingly the easiest way to guarantee *koinōnia* is to provide equality among the symposiasts. The famous equation of equality and friendship bears witness that a sympotic community is one of friendship (*philia*) among equals. But differences of social esteem exist, even among peers, and this is particularly evident in the symposium: Since it is the foremost social institution for people to meet each other, it is also the place where social status within the peer group must be maintained and demonstrated."

Stylistically and logically, it is unlikely that this third group is made up of the same kinds of people as those of the second invitation.¹³⁹

Commentators and scholars for the most part see the third invitation as a reference to Gentile inclusion in Luke's Gospel. Several pieces of evidence advocate for this proposition.

First, the banquet, is not *full* after the righteous "outcasts" of Israel ("the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame") take the places of the excluded κεκλημένοι (cf. Matt 22:10).¹⁴⁰ Because Luke's banquet allegorically represents the final eschatological banquet (14:15), the room must be full in accordance with the bounty of banquet-giver (God).¹⁴¹ Since the remnant of Israel cannot fill the room, invitees must come from outside where the Gentiles might be found.¹⁴²

Secondly, the fact that in the third invitation the master sends the servant to the "highways and hedgerows" (εἰς τὰς ὁδοὺς καὶ φραγμούς) suggests Gentiles are in view.¹⁴³ Unlike the first two invitations, the scope of third lies outside the city where Gentiles were likely to travel or reside.¹⁴⁴ Of course, this does not mean that the third invitation *only* has Gentiles in view; but merely that Luke understood Gentiles as being included within it.¹⁴⁵

¹³⁹ *Contra* Lemcio who argues against an allegorical interpretation of Luke's third summons. Lemcio, "The Parables of the Great Supper and Wedding Feast," 9.

¹⁴⁰ In 14:22, the banquet-giver's servant informs his master after the second invitation, "What you ordered has been done, but there is still room [καὶ ἔτι τόπος ἐστίν]."

¹⁴¹ Adjectives in 14:16 like "great" (μέγας) and "many" (πολύς) indicate the bounty of the eschatological banquet-giver.

¹⁴² Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1277.

¹⁴³ In *Exp. Luc.* 7.202, Ambrose of Milan writes, "He turned to the Gentiles from the careless scorn of the rich. He invites both good and evil to enter in order to strengthen the good and change the disposition of the wicked for the better." Similarly, in his *Commentary on Luke*, Homily 104.34, Cyril of Alexandria states, "The teachers of the Israelites remained aloof from the supper, as being obstinate, proud and disobedient. They scorned a surpassing invitation, because they had turned aside to earthly things and focused their mind on the vain distractions of this world. The common crowd was invited, and immediately after them the Gentiles."

¹⁴⁴ Boucher, *The Parables*, 103.

¹⁴⁵ Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1277.

Thirdly, Luke's usage of the phrase, "compel [ἀναγκάζω] them to come in" suggests Gentiles were the object of the invitation. A common usage of ἀναγκάζω is in reference to *divine compulsion*, and in the Hellenistic world ἀνάγκη was considered to be a divine power and person.¹⁴⁶ Furthermore, Luke provides us with a similar use of root ἀνάγκ- with regard to Jewish rejection and Gentile inclusion in Paul and Barnabas' sermon in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:46).¹⁴⁷ While we cannot be sure, Luke's use of ἀναγκάζω suggests the divine compulsion aspect of salvation-history in which the Gentiles become beneficiaries of God's invitation to the eschatological banquet.

With regard to the theme of Gentile inclusion in Luke's triad of invitations, Fitzmeyer sums it up well,

The Lucan form of the parable goes still further, allegorizing the original in terms of Luke's ideas of salvation-history. In the separate sending of the servant 'into the streets and lanes of the town' and then 'into the highways and the hedgerows' (outside the town), the implication is clear that first further contemporaries of Jesus' *patris* are invited, the outcasts of the town, Jewish people of less noble standing. Then those from outside the *patris* are also brought in, viz. the Gentiles.¹⁴⁸

In addition to the reference to Gentile inclusion, the triadic framework of invitations also suggests that the delay of the *Parousia* is in Luke's view. Luke has already put his readers in the frame of mind to reflect on the eschatological banquet at the *Parousia* by the introduction to the

¹⁴⁶ Walter Grundmann, "ἀναγκάζω, κτλ," *TDNT* 1:344-347. In the NT, ἀναγκάζω also expresses divine compulsion (1 Cor 9:16).

¹⁴⁷ Acts 13:46-47: "Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: 'We had [ἀναγκαῖον] to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. For this is what the Lord has commanded us: 'I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.'"

¹⁴⁸ Fitzmyer, *Luke X-XXIV*, 1053.

parable (14:15).¹⁴⁹ By announcing in v. 17 that feast is ready (i.e., “all is ready” [ἤδη ἔτοιμά ἐστιν]), Luke kindles genuine expectation of the eschatological consummation in his readers.¹⁵⁰ While being held in such suspense, the reader is shocked to learn that *all* the κεκλημένοι have rejected the banquet-holder’s summons while the feast is literally “getting cold on the table.” Thus materializes a surprising second invitation to the marginalized. The householder commands his servant to “Go quickly [ταχέως]” into the town streets and alleys, using a term (τάχος) which is synonymous with eschatological expectation in Luke¹⁵¹ and other writings.¹⁵² The table is set, the food is ready (since v. 17) and new guests are seated—surely now the eschatological banquet can begin. But the room is not full (v. 22)!¹⁵³ So the master sends his servant out once again, this time much further away outside the city gates, to “compel” unsuspecting travelers in the highways and hedgerows to come to the banquet.

The allegorical inferences cannot be avoided. The master delays the beginning of the eschatological banquet until his house can be filled by a class of people (Gentiles) not normally considered as guests. Instead of imposing a time-limit when the “doors will be closed” to the banquet (cf., Luke 13:25), the third invitation is open-ended, leaving the reader with the distinct

¹⁴⁹ Scott, *Hear Then a Parable*, 164, writes regarding Luke 14:15, “A guest exclaims, ‘Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God’. This beatitude discloses the issue of the delay of the Parousia. When will that time come? The parable provides an answer.”

¹⁵⁰ For the eschatological significance of ἔτοιμος, ἐτοιμάζω, and ἐτοίμως, see Matt 24:44 and 25:10 (cf. Luke 12:40, 47; 1 Pet 1:5; 4:5; Rev 19:7). See also Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom*, 120-121. Luke 21:30 (“Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near”) is also a parallel, though the temporal reference is ἐγγύς and not ἔτοιμος. Hendrickx, *The Parables of Jesus*, 115.

¹⁵¹ See the conclusion of the parable of the Persistent Widow in Luke 18:6-8: “And the Lord said, ‘Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly [ἐν τάχει]. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?’”

¹⁵² See Rom 16:20; Rev 1:1; and 22:6.

¹⁵³ Beasley-Murray writes, “There is in this parable a curious ambivalence relating to present and future salvation, however. The banquet is ready, the guests have arrived, the hall is packed, and the feast is in progress.” Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom*, 122.

impression that the banquet is not yet full and that the divine compulsion of ἀναγκάζω is still operational. Thus, Luke leads his readers to conclude that the *Parousia* is delayed by means of his triadic framework of invitations.

B. Matthew's Expansion of the Allegory to Include a King, a Son, Servants, and a Wedding Feast

While Luke's parable reflects the concerns of salvation-history, Matthew has taken it one step further by expanding his parable to include a king, a son, servants, and a wedding feast. This unique Matthean terminology challenges the audience to seek allegorical meaning. Within this expansion, a careful reader discovers the motifs of Gentile inclusion and the *Parousia*'s delay.

Some scholars have noted that Matthew's transformation of the parable from a mere man holding a dinner (Luke and *Thomas*' Great Banquet) to a king preparing a wedding feast for his son represents conflation of Q with the parable genre of the "*King-Mashal*" where the king always represents God.¹⁵⁴ However the proximity of Matthew's parable of the Tenants makes the allegorical inferences clear. The king is God and the son represents Jesus Christ.¹⁵⁵ In addition to facilitating the insertion of the parable of the Wedding Garment (22:11-14), the mention of the wedding feast of the son/bridegroom in 22:2 signals Matthew's allegory is both eschatological and messianic.¹⁵⁶ One element of Matthew's allegory, however, is less clear: the servants and their three-fold sending.

¹⁵⁴ Olson, "Matthew 22:1-14 as Midrash," 436-437.

¹⁵⁵ Davies and Allison, *Matthew XIX-XXVIII*, 198-199.

¹⁵⁶ Craig Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 518, argues: "God's banquet here makes special allusion to the promised messianic banquet of the messianic era . . . In the narrative logic of the Gospel, Jesus is finally ready to unveil his identity in the final week [before his passion]." See the introduction of this chapter for a short overview of the precedents of the imagery of the eschatological banquet.

Based on proximity and similarity to the preceding parable of the Tenants, the interpreter might assume that the servants represent the prophets sent to Israel.¹⁵⁷ However, the action of the servants in the parable of the Tenants happens before the killing of the son (21:34-36), indicating that the events leading up the *Parousia* are not in view as they are in the Wedding Feast.¹⁵⁸ Another interesting problem of interpretation surrounding the servants is that the king sent out three separate groups (22:3, 4, 10), which does not seem like an incidental detail.¹⁵⁹ It is likely that the first group of servants (v. 3) are the same as the servants in the Tenant parable who represent the Prophets since their message is an invitation to the Wedding Feast only and not an announcement that it is ready.¹⁶⁰ The second group of servants (v. 4) who announce that the feast is “ready,” and who are ignored, mistreated, and killed represent Jesus, John the Baptist, and their disciples who preached the arrival of the Kingdom and the nearness of the eschaton.¹⁶¹ The third and final group of servants (vv. 9-10) sent into the streets to invite “anyone, the bad and the good” after the destruction of the city refer to the Christian apostles.¹⁶² Unlike Luke’s parable where the banquet is not yet full at the conclusion of the action (14:23), Matthew brackets the

¹⁵⁷ Snodgrass, *The Parable of the Wicked Tenants*, 78.

¹⁵⁸ Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 728-729.

¹⁵⁹ Contra Blomberg who denies the allegorical significance of the servants, “The servants are incidental figures, natural props to execute the master’s will, though derivatively they could be taken to mirror any who preach God’s Word.” See Blomberg, *Parables*, 233-234.

¹⁶⁰ Davies and Allison, *Matthew XIX-XXVIII*, 197, write, “The dual sending of the servants is, as in the preceding parable, the sending of God’s messengers. The murder of the servants represents the murder of the prophets and Jesus (cf. 21:35-9).”

¹⁶¹ Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 629-630, writes, “These verses repeat and expand on the preceding verse. As in the preceding parable, a second group of servants is sent with the call (πάλιν ἀπέστειλεν ἄλλους δούλους, ‘again he sent other servants,’ agrees verbatim with the beginning of 21:36). Now the emphasis is strongly on eschatological fulfillment . . . Thus this second group probably consists in Matthew’s mind not of the latter prophets, as in the preceding parable, but of John the Baptist, Jesus, and his disciples, i.e., those who bring the message of eschatological readiness . . . Yet the people of Israel were largely unresponsive.”

¹⁶² Boucher, *Parables*, 104. See also Davies and Allison, *Matthew XIX-XXVIII*, 197, “And the third sending of the servants is the mission of the church.”

action of his parable with the parable of the Wedding Garment (22:11-14) which is a depiction of the Final Judgment using the images of the eschatological wedding feast.¹⁶³

Based on the adaptations made to the parable, we must conclude that in his Wedding Feast parable Matthew has created a not-so-subtle allegorical explanation for the salvation-historical events on which his early Christian community was reflecting.¹⁶⁴ Matthew adapted the parable he received in Q to fit his historical present characterized by conflict between his Christian community and its Jewish neighbors, the increasingly successful Gentile outreach, and the continued tarrying of the *Parousia*. By virtue of these adaptations, the Matthean Jesus speaks directly to the situation of the early Christian movement in the final decades of the first century. Jeremias concurs with this explanation,

Thus, by his allegorical interpretation, Matthew has transformed our parable into an outline of the plan of redemption from the appearance of the prophets, embracing the fall of Jerusalem, up to the Last Judgment. This outline of the history of the plan of redemption is intended to vindicate the transference of the mission to the Gentiles: Israel had rejected it.¹⁶⁵

The focus of Matthew's allegorical story of the king, son, servants, and wedding feast is a salvation-historical explanation of the reason why so many from Israel have rejected Jesus and how that rejection opened the way for a new type of guest in the Kingdom of God--the Gentiles.

But in addition to the theme of Gentile inclusion, there is also another motif at work in Matthew's use of the king, son, multiple servants, and the wedding feast. These terms suggest also the delay of the *Parousia*. The servants' work of collecting "anyone, the bad and the good"

¹⁶³ Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 631.

¹⁶⁴ Weren, "From Q to Matthew 22,1-14," 674-679, suggests another solution to the origin of the imagery of king and wedding feast. Weren argues that the images of the king and his rebellious subjects come from the same Q-material which Luke adapted in his throne-claimant image found in the parable of the Minas (Luke 19:12-27). According to Weren, only Matt 22:8-10 come from the Q-parable of the Wedding Feast/Banquet.

¹⁶⁵ Jeremias, *Parables*, 68-69.

(πάντας . . . πονηρούς τε καὶ ἀγαθούς) and sending them to the banquet in 22:10 continues until the appearance of the eschatological Bridegroom. Thus, the situation is analogous to the parable of the Net (13:47-50) where the Kingdom of God is likened to a drift-net that catches all kinds of fish, both clean and unclean, until the separation at the Great Assize.¹⁶⁶ Matthew pricks eschatological expectation by the fact that the wedding feast is already on the table (22:4) and that the banquet hall is full (22:10), suggesting that the final closure of the doors, though delayed, could come as a surprise just as in the parable of the Virgins (25:10). Thus, the wedding feast's delay is nearing its end.¹⁶⁷ In Matthew's salvation-historical paradigm, the wedding feast, though delayed because of the obstinacy of the κεκλημένοι, is nearly ready to begin and could do so at any moment.

C. Matthew's Parable of the Wedding Garment in 22:11-14

The narrative material in 22:11-14 appended to the parable of the Wedding Feast is a unique Matthean feature which demands more reflection.¹⁶⁸ Though most interpreters claim that the connection between the two is clumsy and disjointed, vv. 11-14 carry forward many of the images and themes of 22:1-10.¹⁶⁹ Nevertheless, as mentioned above, there are significant enough

¹⁶⁶ Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom*, 120-121.

¹⁶⁷ Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, 521.

¹⁶⁸ Both the Lukan and Thomassine parables of the Great Banquet conclude after the final invitation. Afterwards, there is a declaration of judgment in both (see Luke 14:24). In Matt, however, this declaration of judgment appears at the conclusion the narrative material in vs. 11-13 which we are calling "the parable of the Wedding Garment."

¹⁶⁹ Beasley-Murray writes, "Rather than postulating an unusually inept bit of free composition by Matt, it is more plausible to assume that he found a short parable about a feast arranged by a king for his son and conjoined it with the parable of a feast arranged by a man for his friends, incorporating the introduction to the second parable into that of the first." Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom*, 119. Weren, "From Q to Matthew 22,1-14," 677-678, provides an alternate idea. Weren argues that the material in Matt 22:11-13 connects to the image of the king and his treatment of his rebellious subjects in vv. 2-7, "Is 22,11-13 an entirely new creation by Matthew? No, this is not the case. In composing these verses, he elaborated on the old parable on the king and his subjects of which we found such powerful traces in 22,3-7." Weren believes that the images of the king, his rebellious subjects, and the wedding garment come from a pre-existing source such as Q.

differences between the language of vv. 11-14 and vv. 1-10 to assume that Matthew has united another parable to the Wedding Feast (from either another tradition or entirely of his own composition).¹⁷⁰ Also, between vv. 1-10 and vv. 11-14 there is a significant break in the narrative. In vv. 8-10, the final group of servants has been gathering all they could find in the city's outlets (διέξοδοι) to lead them into the banquet hall. In contrast, in vv. 11-13, the king, and presumably the son, have arrived at the banquet hall and the feast has already begun. The king, who is circulating in the full banquet hall, reprimands one of the guests found in the thoroughfares for not having the appropriate garments. Because of these linguistic and narrative differences from vv. 1-10, we will refer to vv. 11-13 as the "parable of the Wedding Garment."

Why has Matthew departed from the Q-parable which ended after a third invitation and added a parable from another source or of his own formulation?¹⁷¹ The answer is because of Matthew's motif of Gentile inclusion in the parable of the Wedding Feast.¹⁷² In 22:7 the king became enraged at the mistreatment and slaughter of his servants and sent his army to destroy the "city" of the original invitees. As we will argue below, this "city" is Jerusalem, the *omphalos* of

¹⁷⁰ Kloppenborg, *Q Parallels*, 166, omits Matt 22:11-14 from his reconstruction of Q. Similarly, Robinson, *et al., eds., The Critical Edition of Q*, 447-448, trace Q back only to the Matt 22:10, omitting vv.11-14. See also Jeremias, *Parables*, 65.

¹⁷¹ Hendrickx, *Parables*, 127.

¹⁷² J. D. M. Derrett offers a countering explanation for the presence of the Wedding Garment parable in his book, *Law in the New Testament* (London: Dartman, Longman and Todd, 1970), 126-155. According to Derrett, Matt 22:11-14 is a midrash on Zeph 1:7-9 using the text of *Tg. Ps.-J.* Derrett argues, "The parable is a tale which, contrary to popular opinion, has no implausible elements, and which, as in the case of other parables we have studied, utilises features and words at the story level to call up biblical passages by way of *midrashim* which themselves re-illustrate and document the parable . . . There is no evidence, for example, that the Gentiles are referred to; nor is urgency or crisis to the fore." While Derrett's arguments are interesting and insightful, it stretches credulity that a relatively obscure document like *Tg. Ps.-J.* is the key to interpretation of the Wedding Feast parable instead of contextual insights gleaned from Matthew's Gospel itself such as the parable of the Tenants. Daniel C. Olson, "Matthew 22:1-14 as Midrash," 437-438, accepts Derrett's thesis that the Wedding Feast parable is midrash on Zephaniah 1, but rejects *Tg. Ps.-J.* as the key to interpretation. Instead, Olson uses the Masoretic and the Septuagint versions Zeph 1. Even so, Olson faces some major challenges to his thesis in the form of theological foci in Zeph 1 that are absent in the Matthean parable. See Daniel C. Olson, "Matthew 22:1-14 as Midrash," 445-446. Nevertheless, Olson's argument that Matt 22:11-14 is a midrash on Zeph 1 need not stand in opposition to our arguments above.

first century Jewish worship and life. After declaring the first invitees (the κεκλημένοι or the “called” of Israel) unworthy of the banquet, the king sends a final group of servants into the διέξοδοι, the “outlets” or “thoroughfares,”¹⁷³ which signify streets that cut “through the city boundary” and “go out into the open country.”¹⁷⁴ In the διέξοδοι, the servants invite anyone they could find (πάντας οὓς εἶπον) according to their master’s wishes, “both the bad and the good” (22:9-10). Based on this language and the placement of Matthew’s final invitation in the διέξοδοι, this third group of invitees included Gentiles as well as marginalized Jews.¹⁷⁵

Matthew, however, faced a theological problem by including non-law-observant Jews and Gentiles (i.e., the “bad and the good”) in the eschatological banquet of his parable. Matthew’s Gospel focuses on righteousness (5:6, 10, 20; 6:33) and obedience (conceptualized as “bearing fruit” in 3:8; 7:15-23; 21:43) which are *hearing* and *doing* the word (e.g., 7:24-29).¹⁷⁶ Due to his presentation in 22:1-10, Matthew worried that his readers might misconstrue the open invitation to all kinds of people (both the “bad and the good”) for libertinism or antinomianism. Thus, Matthew inserted the parable of the Wedding Garment “in order to check any misunderstanding that could be derived from the parable [of the Wedding Feast].”¹⁷⁷ The parable of the Wedding Garment emphasizes that righteousness and obedience are required of those who enter into the eschatological wedding feast by means of the third and final invitation (22:8-10). Perhaps Matthew was preoccupied with the danger that “third-invitation-Gentiles,” who were not well acquainted with Israel’s moral traditions, may not have grasped the importance of obedience for

¹⁷³ *Contra* many modern English translations which use the more imprecise term ‘streets’ or ‘roads.’

¹⁷⁴ William Arndt, *et al.*, eds., “διέξοδος,” BAGD 194.

¹⁷⁵ Hendricks, *Parables*, 126, writes, “The expression τὰς διέξόδους τῶν ὁδῶν refers to the place where the streets of the city turn into country roads, and is probably an allusion to the Gentile mission. The householder insists that they should ‘invite to the wedding anyone you can come upon.’”

¹⁷⁶ Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, 119-121.

¹⁷⁷ Hultgren, *Parables*, 347.

daily life.¹⁷⁸ The image of the wedding garment, evocative of acts of righteousness, reminds the reader of the importance of good deeds and counterbalances “the point made in v 10 concerning the ‘bad and the good.’”¹⁷⁹ If indeed the third invitation concerns Gentiles and non-law-observant Jews, it is not surprising that the importance of righteousness makes an appearance in the Wedding Garment parable.¹⁸⁰

The argument that the parable of the Wedding Garment exists to correct a possible libertine interpretation of Matthew’s third invitation to the “*bad* and the good” depends on two propositions. First, without an allegorical explanation for the wedding clothes, the exclusion of inappropriately-clad guest (22:12: “Friend,’ he asked, ‘how did you get in here without wedding clothes?’”) cannot be integrated into the symbolic scheme parable of the Wedding Feast. In short, the exclusion would be nonsense in view of 22:9-10 where the king directed his servants to invite *anyone* in the city’s outlets to his feast, obviously *without regard to their wardrobe!*¹⁸¹ As Bernard Scott notes, “It is not at all evident where such a poor guest would acquire a wedding garment. The destruction of the verisimilitude forces attention away from the story’s story (from what happens) to its discourse (to what it means).”¹⁸² If the rejection of the guest without a wedding garment makes no sense in the context of the story, than what does it mean? It means that the wedding garment must have allegorical significance in connection with “righteous deeds.”

¹⁷⁸ At this point, the concept of “covenant nomism” is helpful. Matt teaches in the parable of the Wedding Feast that anyone can “get in” to the Kingdom of God (e.g., 22:14: “Many are called”). However, there are requirements for “staying in,” paralleling the concept of covenant nomism which stipulates righteousness as part of living out one’s identity as chosen (e.g., 22:14: “Few are chosen”). See also Matt 5:20: “For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven”).

¹⁷⁹ Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 631.

¹⁸⁰ See Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, 119-120. Scott, *Hear then a Parable*, 162-163.

¹⁸¹ Blomberg, *Parables*, 33

¹⁸² Scott, *Hear Then a Parable*, 162.

A second proposition is that the wedding garment allegorically refers to the righteousness that clothes those who will be vindicated at the Judgment (see Matt 13:43; Rev 3:4, 18; 19:8).¹⁸³ *First Enoch* 62:15-16 contains an interesting parallel in which garments receive an allegorical significance similar to the Wedding Garment parable.¹⁸⁴ In addition to these parallel references, we can add more evidence in the text itself of a moral perspective. The indictment against the κεκλημένοι who reject the first and second invitation (22:8) is “unworthiness” (οὐκ ἦσαν ἄξιοι). “Unworthiness” suggests a moral shortcoming resulting in exclusion from the banquet. Furthermore, the final declaration of judgment (22:14) indicates that the difference between the merely invited (κλητοί) and the actually chosen (ἐκλεκτοί) has to do with their actions.¹⁸⁵ The moral failure of 22:1-10 is rejection of the banquet invitation. The moral failure of 22:11-14 is failure to live as one invited to the banquet, allegorically denoted by “soiled garments” which represents unrighteousness.¹⁸⁶ Hagner summarizes the direction of our argument well,

The material added by Matthew at this point (vv 11-14) apparently has as its purpose to emphasize the very great importance of righteousness for those who would enter the kingdom (cf. 5:20) and thus to balance the point made in v 10 concerning the ‘bad and good.’ This added material corresponds to the emphasis in the preceding parable on the giving of fruit in its season by the tenant farmers (21:41, 43). Although these verses are carefully joined with what precedes (note: king, those reclining at the table, wedding garment), it is difficult not to notice the awkwardness in the surprising requirement that one person called in off the street should be clothed in a ‘wedding garment.’¹⁸⁷

¹⁸³ Davies and Allison, *Matthew XIX-XXVIII*, 204-205. See also Isa 61:10: “I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.”

¹⁸⁴ Translation by E. Isaac, “1 (Ethiopic Apocalypse of) Enoch,” in *OTP*, 44.

¹⁸⁵ Hendrickx, *Parables*, 129, writes, “Human responsibility plays a part in the doing of God’s justice, in the doing of the Father’s will (Mt 21:31), in producing the fruits of the kingdom of God (Mt. 21:43). Only in practising God’s justice is election realized.”

¹⁸⁶ Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, 117-119.

¹⁸⁷ Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 631.

In essence, Matthew has made the point in 22:1-10 that the eschatological banquet is open to anyone who will respond positively to the invitation, even Gentiles and non-law-observing Jews. But in 22:11-14, Matthew is seeking a balance by guarding “against the reception of the Gentiles into the Church on too easy terms.”¹⁸⁸ Thus, Matthew added 22:11-14, the parable of the Wedding Garment, to respond to an inherent danger of libertinism posed by the incorporation of Gentiles and non-law-observant Jews in the early Christian community.

D. The Persecution of the Servants and the Sacking of the “City” in Matt 22:6-7

The final challenge of interpretation we will examine is the Matthean addition of the persecution of the servants and the sacking of the “city.” In Luke and the *Gos. Thom.*, the κεκλημένοι give no other offense than excusing themselves from a banquet which they should have gratefully attended, though this offense would be considered grave.¹⁸⁹ However, in Matthew, the κεκλημένοι add injury to insult by inexplicably mistreating the king’s servants (22:6).¹⁹⁰ This provocation, absent in Luke and *Gos. Thom.*, induces the king to send his servants to kill the first group of invitees and raze their “city” (22:7). These details imply that Matthew is again allegorically addressing the issues of Gentile inclusion and the delay of the *Parousia*.

¹⁸⁸ Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom*, 121-122.

¹⁸⁹ Hultgren, *Parables*, 344, writes, “But those who should be prepared for it turn down the final summons, which can be considered an extreme offense since they had made a provisional acceptance previously.” Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, 520, notes, “Those invited might reject an invitation if they wished to insult the status of the host or questioned the security of his future; thus guests as well as hosts could play a role in the distribution of honor and shame. For *all* the invited guests to refuse to come would shame the host.”

¹⁹⁰ According to Bauckham, “The Parable of the Royal Wedding Feast,” 484, the mistreatment of the servants is not inexplicable nor is it an indication of an allegory. Instead it is a true-to-life example of rebellion of a vassal against his lord. Bauckham explains, “The attendance of the great men of the kingdom at the wedding feast of the king’s son would be expected not only as a necessary expression of the honor they owe the king but also as an expression of their loyalty to the legitimate succession to his throne. Political allegiance is at stake. Excuses would hardly be acceptable, and the invitees (unlike those in the Lukan parable) offer none. To refuse the invitation is tantamount to rebellion.”

Let us begin with the persecution of the servants. Earlier in this chapter we argued that the three separate sendings of the servants in Matthew represent the prophets (the first sending); Jesus, John the Baptist and the disciples (the second); and finally, the apostles and missionaries of the early Christian community (the third).¹⁹¹ The fact that the second group of servants are persecuted and killed by the first invitees (the κεκλημένοι representing “called” Israel) is significant (22:6). Not only are the κεκλημένοι dismissive of God and his invitation, they are openly hostile to it.¹⁹² Without a doubt, the persecution of the servants is also evidence of the assimilation of details into the Wedding Feast parable from the parable of the Tenants where the servants are also persecuted and killed (21:34-38). However, the rejection, persecution, and killing of the “second-sending-servants” by the κεκλημένοι results in Matthew’s third invitation (to the city’s “outlets”) where Gentiles and non-law-observant Jews receive the call to the eschatological banquet.¹⁹³ According to Hendrickx, “The parable has thereby become a historical sketch of the transition from the Jewish to the Gentile mission. The latter is justified by the fact that the first invitees were unworthy because they responded with extreme insolence to the urgent invitation.”¹⁹⁴ In the persecution of the servants of the Wedding Feast parable, Matthew has fused the theme of Jewish rejection with Gentile inclusion.

But in the servants’ persecution, Matthew also reveals eschatological concerns.¹⁹⁵ In the first and second sending of the Wedding Feast parable we see the situation portended by Jesus in his

¹⁹¹ Boucher, *Parables*, 104; Davies and Allison, *Matthew XIX-XXVIII*, 197.

¹⁹² Jeremias, *Parables*, 68-69.

¹⁹³ Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 626-627, notes, “As in the preceding and parallel parable of the wicked tenant farmers, again there is reference to the killing of servants and the loss on the part of those who ignore the invitation to the banquet, including the loss of their favored status. The invitation to the messianic banquet is opened up to all, the invitation of the king becomes the opportunity of all others.”

¹⁹⁴ Hendrickx, *Parables*, 132.

¹⁹⁵ Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 629-630, notes that in the persecution of the servants, “Now the emphasis is strongly on eschatological fulfillment.”

Missionary Discourse (Matt 10:1-42//Luke 10:1-24) in which the disciples are sent as witnesses to a recalcitrant Israel.¹⁹⁶ Since we have discussed the consequences of Matt 10:5-6 for Gentile inclusion in Chapter Two,¹⁹⁷ we will limit our discussion here to the eschatological implications of the Missionary Discourse. Matthew has warned his readers that the mission to Israel will occasion great suffering and persecution of God's servants (10:17-22). However, this mission and subsequent persecution experienced by the Jewish missionaries at the hands of their coreligionists also prefigures the *Parousia*:

All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. When you are persecuted in one place, flee to another. I tell you the truth, you will not finish going through the cities of Israel before the Son of Man comes. (10:22-23)

Matthew's Eschatological Discourse similarly weds the concept of the persecution of God's servants as one of the signs preceding the *Parousia* (24:9-14).¹⁹⁸ We will discuss the significance of these eschatological overtones in our treatment of Matthew's image of the sacking of the "city."

The sacking of the "city," a unique Matthean addition to the Wedding Feast parable, is a detail fraught with symbolism and eschatological significance. On one hand, the sacking of the city is no doubt a realistic detail since any ancient king worth his salt would take military action against subjects who have shamed him in such a harsh and offensive way.¹⁹⁹ On the other hand,

¹⁹⁶ E.g., 10:5-6: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel."

¹⁹⁷ See pages 88-90 of Chapter Two for a discussion of the significance of Matt 10:5-6 for Gentile inclusion. On these pages we argue that Jesus' command to limit ministry to Israel in the Missionary Discourse originates from the salvation-historical perspective of Matt. Before Easter, the focus of the Gospel was on Israel, though there are hints of openness to Gentiles. After Easter, the focus of the Gospel is on the Gentiles, though Israel continues to be an object of the Gospel's preaching.

¹⁹⁸ This section of the Eschatological Discourse (24:9-14) ends with the declaration: "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come."

¹⁹⁹ Blomberg, *Parables*, 238.

given the socio-political context of Matthew's Gospel (the final decades of the first century A.D.) and many other parallels (21:18-19, 41; 23:38; 24:1-2; etc.), the statement, "He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city," must refer to the events of A.D. 70.²⁰⁰ The destruction of Jerusalem by foreign armies as a judgment of YHWH for the intractability of the people of Israel was an established and oft-used theme.²⁰¹ R.T. France writes,

To attribute the Roman devastation to the troops of the king (God) echoes the robust theology of the OT prophets who hailed pagan conquerors as God's instruments (Isa 10:5-11; 44:28-45:7; Jer 25:9, etc.). The phrase "their city" thus depicts the devastating result of the failure of Jerusalem's current leadership; Jerusalem is now no longer God's city but "theirs," and the community as a whole is implicated in their rebellion and its punishment, as had so often happened in the past when Israel's sins had led to the city's destruction by invading armies.²⁰²

As is the case elsewhere in Matthew's Gospel (e.g., 23:37-39), Jerusalem, the hostile and rebellious "city" of the Wedding Feast parable, thus symbolizes for Matthew Israel's rejection of Jesus and the early Christian community's message about him.²⁰³ The destruction of the "city" symbolically represents God's judgment on his covenant people and the Gentiles' opportunity to occupy a place in the eschatological wedding banquet spurned by many (though not all) in Israel.²⁰⁴

But the sacking of Jerusalem and its temple had more significance than merely as a symbol of the possibility of Gentile inclusion. The Synoptic Gospels view the destruction of Jerusalem as an eschatological event (Mark 13:2//Matt 24:2//Luke 21:6).²⁰⁵ Not surprisingly,

²⁰⁰ Hultgren, *Parables*, 345; Martens, "Produce Fruit Worthy of Repentance," 163-164; Hendrickx, *Parables*, 125-126; Davies and Allison, *Matthew XIX-XXVIII*, 201-202; Jeremias, *Parables*, 68-69; etc.

²⁰¹ Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, 518-519.

²⁰² France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 825.

²⁰³ Martens, "Produce Fruit Worthy of Repentance," 164.

²⁰⁴ Martens, "Produce Fruit Worthy of Repentance," 165.

²⁰⁵ Wilson, *The Gentiles*, 71.

therefore, it appears in the Wedding Feast parable. Most significantly, a reference to the desecration/destruction of the Jerusalem temple is part of the eschatological discourse in all three Synoptic Gospels (Mark 13:14//Matt 24:15; cf. Luke 21:20).²⁰⁶ While no definite chronological deduction can be made as to where the events of A.D. 70 fit into the broader eschatological timeline, at minimum the fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy of Jerusalem's sacking moves history one large step closer to the *Parousia*.²⁰⁷

If we take the view that the persecution of the servants (22:7) has connections to the eschatological prophecies of Matthew's Missionary and Eschatological Discourses (particularly 10:22-23 and 24:9-14), then the sacking of Jerusalem enhances the eschatological flavor of the parable of the Wedding Feast. In Matt 24, Jerusalem's sacking is one of several tribulations leading up to the *Parousia* (24:29-31) and Final Judgment. In the Great Banquet parable, after the sacking of Jerusalem, there is only one more scene before the Judgment (22:11-14)—the third and final invitation to “anyone, the bad and the good” (22:8-10).

What then can we conclude about Matthew's intentions? His addition of the persecution of the servants and the sacking of the “city” in 22:6-7 effectively sets the literary stage for the third invitation (22:8-10). The king repudiates his invitation to the obstinate, ungracious, and violent κεκλημένοι and destroys them. Then the king delays the beginning of his son's eschatological

²⁰⁶ There are a number of reasons for assuming that Matt and Mark's enigmatic reference to the “abomination of desolation” (τὸ βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως) speaks of the sacking and defilement of the Jerusalem temple. First, the “abomination of desolation” in Daniel 11:31 and 12:11 refers to the desecration of the temple by Antiochus IV Epiphanes in 167 B.C. Thus, the Matthean reader would expect any mention of these verses to represent another sacking or desecration of the same temple. Second, a question about the destruction of the Jerusalem temple occasions Matthew's Eschatological Discourse (24:1-2). Third, Luke has interpreted Mark's reference to the “abomination of desolation” as the sacking of Jerusalem in 21:20. See France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 341 and Davies and Allison, *Matthew XIX-XXVIII*, 345-346.

²⁰⁷ Balabanski, *Eschatology in the Making*, 16. That Jesus did prophecy Jerusalem's sacking is suggested by the fact that it is one of the charges leveled against him before his crucifixion (Mark 14:58//Matt 26:61).

wedding feast for the purposes of the inviting those formerly excluded, both Gentiles and marginalized Jews, even though “the food is literally on the table.”²⁰⁸

In essence, in the addition of 22:6-7, we see how the early Christian community has “applied many parables to its own situation, characterized by the delay of the *Parousia* and Gentile mission” by means of the “expedient of allegory.”²⁰⁹ Matthew’s addition of 22:6-7 with the subsequent third invitation is really an allegorical/parabolic way of expressing the message of 24:14 (=Mark 13:10), “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”²¹⁰ In the Wedding Feast parable, the delay of the *Parousia* is the divinely appointed space to complete the third invitation to Gentiles/nations (and the marginalized of Israel) before the great Judgment where the king (God) will separate the invited from the chosen (22:14).²¹¹

VI. Delay of the *Parousia*, Gentile Inclusion, and the Message of the Parable of the Wedding Feast/Great Banquet

In our comprehensive examination of some challenges of interpretation connected with the themes of Gentile inclusion and the delay of the *Parousia* in the parable of the Wedding Feast/Great Banquet, it is possible to see the “trees” of the parable’s narrative details and yet be lost in the “forest” of allegory and context. As we conclude our examination of the parable, it is helpful to consider the parable from a broader perspective.

²⁰⁸ Scott, *Hear Then a Parable*, 162-163.

²⁰⁹ Jeremias, *Parables*, 66.

²¹⁰ Another way to think about 22:6-7 and the third invitation is in terms of Matt 28:16-20. After being persecuted and killed by the *κεκλημένοι* of Israel (c.f., 22:5-7), the resurrected Jesus commissions his disciples on a mountain in Galilee to “make disciples of all nations” (i.e., much like 22:8-10) until the end of the age. *All nations* infers a *broadening* of the scope of salvation to all nations, not the *exclusion* of Israel. Thus, 28:16-20 is as much about the Jews as the Gentiles.

²¹¹ In this sense, the parable of the Wedding Garment very much resembles the parabolic description of the Final Judgment in 25:31-46.

A question that can help us uncover the broader significance of our parable is “What theological concerns do Matthew and Luke’s Gospels address in the Wedding Feast/Great Banquet parable?” An important theological concern for Matthew and Luke which also appears in our parable is delay of the *Parousia*.

In his Gospel and Acts, Luke has “understood that the expectation of an imminent end cannot be continued.”²¹² In essence Luke is preoccupied to some extent with the ever lengthening period of time after Easter. For example, the lesson of the Unjust Judge (18:6-8) voices Luke’s concern,

Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly [ἐν τάχει]. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?

Concern for the *Parousia*’s delay is foremost in the Persistent Widow parable from Luke’s special source.²¹³ In Luke’s introduction to Acts he shows pastoral concern that the *Parousia*’s delay not unduly trouble his readers. When his disciples ask, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the Kingdom of Israel?” (Acts 1:6), the Lukan Jesus responds, “It is not for you to know the times or dates.” (Acts 1:7). Instead, Jesus calls his disciples to be witnesses in “Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria,” and finally to the Gentiles inhabiting the “ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).²¹⁴ In the above texts, Luke tries to give meaning to the period of time between Easter and the *Parousia* as a period set aside by God for Gentile inclusion.

²¹² Hans Conzelmann, *An Outline of the Theology of the New Testament* (London: SCM Press, 1969), 149.

²¹³ Moore, *The Parousia in the New Testament*, 162, writes, “As it stands now, this parable speaks not simply of prayer in general (cf. v. 1) but of the prayerful longing of the faithful for the Parousia (cf. v8b); if this is the meaning imposed by Luke, it is especially significant that he had emphasized *en tachei*. As in the case of the parable Lk. 13, 6-9, there is a tension of delay and nearness; though the End delays, it is near, and through near there is yet time to repent. There is little warrant for understanding *en tachei* as ‘suddenly’ or ‘unexpected’; in keeping with its general New Testament usage it means ‘without undue delay.’”

²¹⁴ Thompson, “The Gentile Mission,” 25-26, notes, “In Acts 1:6 a question not unlike the question asked in Mark 13:4, which set the stage for Jesus’ eschatological discourse, is answered in a similar fashion. The risen Lord responds to questions about the ‘when’ of the kingdom of God by rejecting all questions about ‘times and seasons’;

Luke's concern about the delay of the Parousia also plays out in the narrative "hook" for the Great Banquet Parable, the beatitude in 14:15.²¹⁵ This beatitude is a transparent reference to the eschatological feast at the *Parousia* of the Christ. Thus, in the Great Banquet parable, Luke challenges his reader to reflect on the delay of the *Parousia*. Bernard Scott notes, "This beatitude discloses the issue of the delay of the Parousia. When will that time come?"²¹⁶

Just as in Luke, a broad look at Matthew also shows a preoccupation with the delay of the *Parousia*, especially in the narration of Jesus' final days in Jerusalem. In another parable about a wedding banquet, the parable of the Virgins (25:1-13), Matthew uses the technical term for the *Parousia*'s delay, *χρονίζω* (v. 5), to portray the Christian community's concern about the ever lengthening period after Easter.²¹⁷ But *χρονίζω* (v. 48) also appears in the parable of the Wise and Foolish Servant (24:45-51). In this context, the foolish servant employs his absent master's delay as a pretext for moral laxity, betraying Matthew's concern for moral preparedness in the Christian community while it waits for the unexpected moment of the *Parousia* which could be later than first thought.²¹⁸ The parable of the Talents (24:14-30) portrays the master entrusting his servants with his property, departing on a journey and then returning "after a long time" (25:19: *μετὰ δὲ πολὺν χρόνον*). Many commentators suggest that this reference, which we will

instead, he lays down the program for the world mission. In the same way, the promise at the conclusion of Matthew's version of the mission charge (Matt 28:19) is, 'I will be with you to the end of the age.'"

²¹⁵ Compare 14:15 with the narrative introduction to the parable of the Minas (19:11): "While they were listening to this, he [Jesus] went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of the God was going to appear at once." Wolter, "Israel's Future and the Delay of the Parousia," 321, notes, "The parousia's delay thereby makes obsolete the 'near-expectation' articulated in Luke 19:11 and Acts 1:6. Acts 1:8 shows with particular clarity that although the apostles expected the *basileia* to be reestablished for Israel in the imminent future, its failure to materialize did not empty the interim period of history of all meaning. Rather this delay has been made to serve a salvific-historical goal, namely, to provide space for the history of the preaching of Christ that beings in Jerusalem and that is carried "to the ends of the earth."

²¹⁶ Scott, *Hear Then a Parable*, 164.

²¹⁷ Balabanski, *Eschatology in the Making*, 39.

²¹⁸ Davies and Allison, *Matthew XIX-XXVIII*, 389.

analyze at length in the next chapter, reflects the early Christian community's experience of the delayed *Parousia*.²¹⁹ Clearly, Matthew shares Luke's concern about the significance that the delay of the *Parousia* held for his readers.

But it is not merely the passage of time after Easter that concerns Luke and Matthew. They must also account for the phenomena of Israel's hardening to the early Christian community's message and the increasing quantity of Gentiles willing to receive it. This is another theological focus that appears broadly in Matthew and Luke.

With regard to Luke-Acts, texts like Luke 13:28-30 and Acts 28:23-28 which we studied in Chapter Three show Luke's great concern to address the hardening of Israel and the inclusion of Gentiles.²²⁰ In fact, the issue of Gentile inclusion, like the delay of the *Parousia*, preoccupied the theological reflection of the author of Luke-Acts,

In Luke's writings we see a sensitive Gentile Christian with a good knowledge of and sympathy for Judaism wrestling with one of the most difficult issues for the church of his day and reaching some important conclusions. These include at least the view that the people of God is henceforth decisively different from the national group that has hitherto occupied that position, but that this change deriving from the response of both Jews and Gentiles to Jesus, the Jews' Messiah, represents not a volte-face on God's part, but the fulfillment of a plan to which the Jewish Scriptures bear witness.²²¹

Though Gentile inclusion and the delay of the *Parousia* were by no means the only themes that concerned Luke, they were extremely significant.

²¹⁹ Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom*, 218.

²²⁰ To these we could add Acts 13:44-51. George Eldon Ladd claims, "Passages like Acts 13:44-51 and 28:17-18 have traditionally been seen to express such a view—Israel's rejection of the gospel opens the way for the Gentiles to take their place as the people of God." George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 240.

²²¹ Ladd, *Theology*, 242.

Not surprisingly, Israel's hardening and Gentile inclusion are also common themes throughout Matthew's Gospel. Hans Conzelmann argues,

The empirical Israel has misunderstood its commission to be a light to the nations and therefore lost its election (in a metaphor: the vineyard has been given to another people). The church has taken the place of Israel . . . This tie with Israel does not lead Matthew to limit the church to Jewish Christianity; on the contrary, the task of Israel was always a universal one. This is the origin of Matthew's notion of the church made up of all nations.²²²

The strongest expression of this theme appears in the accounts of Jesus' final days before his passion (21:1-25:46).²²³ Although Israel and her leaders come under God's judgment for their incredulity about Jesus and his teaching, Matthew still sees a key role for believing Jews in an early Christian community that increasingly embraces the Gentiles.²²⁴ As was suggested in 1:3-6, 2:1-12, 8:5-13, 15:21-28, 21:43, 22:8-9, 24:14 and 26:13, the final scene of Matthew's Gospel (28:16-20) confirms the centrality of Gentile inclusion in his theology.²²⁵ Both 28:16-20 (par. Acts 1:6-8) and 24:14 (=Mark 13:10) envision the inclusion of the Gentiles happening during an interim period between Easter and the *Parousia*.

With these broad strokes painted on the canvass of the Gospels of Luke and Matthew, it is hard to miss the significance of the parable of the Wedding Feast/Great Banquet for the motifs of Gentile inclusion and the delay of the *Parousia*. In Luke and Matthew, the hoped-for-*Parousia* with its accompanying eschatological banquet has yet to occur even many decades after Easter. During this time God's servants have been sent repeatedly to announce Jesus as Israel's Messiah

²²² Conzelmann, *An Outline*, 145.

²²³ In *A Theology of the Gospel of Matthew* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 117-132, Ulrich Luz argues that the controversies and eschatological discourse of Matt in chs. 21-25 focus on the dynamic of Israel's hardness and the resulting eschatological judgment.

²²⁴ Ladd, *Theology*, 226.

²²⁵ Ladd, *Theology*, 226.

with little response from the κεκλημένοι who should have gratefully received the message (i.e., Luke and Matthew's first invitation). Not only has the message been rejected, but the Christian apostles and prophets have endured persecution and the scorn of their fellow people because of it (i.e., Matthew's second invitation). Surely, this troubling time-period must have had more significance than merely as a test of the early Christian community's moral fortitude and endurance as it awaited its vindication by the eschatological bridegroom (e.g., the *watchfulness parenesis* in Matt 24:45-25:13). Into this breach appears the concept of Gentile inclusion (i.e., Matthew and Luke's the third invitation)—a final invitation to any and all who would receive it. God, in his eternal wisdom, has provided a period for Gentiles to join the faithful remnant of Israel in the early Christian community before the eschatological banquet.

VII. Conclusion

In our analysis we argued that the parable of the Wedding Feast/Great Banquet in Matthew and Luke is essentially an allegory of salvation-history in the form of a parable about the eschatological banquet first mentioned in the OT Prophets and developed in other Jewish literature.²²⁶ We proposed that the parable of the Wedding Feast (Matthew) and Great Banquet (Luke and *Gos. Thom.*) have a common source (Q) and we outlined that source in order to discern unique Matthean, Lukan, and *Thomassine* additions. When observed from the perspective of their unique additions, both Luke and Matthew used the parable to shed light on two realities which troubled their communities: the ever lengthening period of time after Easter and the willingness of Gentiles to accept the teaching of the early Christian movement. Of these

²²⁶ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, 1052.

two themes, Gentile inclusion, brought about in part by the rejection of the early Christian message by many in Israel, was certainly the stronger.²²⁷

Nevertheless, we also observed that the question of the *Parousia*'s timing was part of Matthew and Luke's deliberations in the Wedding Feast/Great Banquet parable. Despite recognizing the possibility of delay, the early Christian community hoped that the *Parousia* would not be long in coming. Using the image of the eschatological banquet described in the OT prophets, Matthew and Luke brought urgency to the reflection on the *Parousia*'s timing. Their solution, however, was much different than other delay-texts where Matthew and Luke encouraged moral preparation, patience, and endurance. In the parable of the Wedding Feast/Great Banquet, Matthew and Luke taught that God had set aside time for a final invitation to all people, both Gentiles and the marginalized of Israel, to enter into the eschatological blessings of the Bridegroom. Like the motif of the growth in the parables of the Weeds and Wheat and Mustard Seed, the image of the eschatological feast found in the Wedding Feast/Great Banquet parable combines the motifs of the delay of the *Parousia* and inclusion of the Gentiles into the early Christian community.

Now that we have analyzed the motif of the Wedding Feast/Great Banquet in connection with delay and Gentile inclusion, we will turn our attention to another literary theme present in the NT parables: the absent master. To this end we will study the parable of the Talents/Minas (Matt 25:14-30//Luke 19:11-27) where we will also find an interesting amalgamation of the delay of the *Parousia* and Gentile inclusion.

²²⁷ Davies and Allison, *Matthew XIX-XXVIII*, 207, write, "22.1-14 carries forward the two main points of the previous two parables: first, the polemic against the Jewish leaders is, through the introduction of vv. 6-7, continued, and secondly, the theme of the kingdom passing from the people of Israel to a non-ethnic entity with a universal mission is reiterated."

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE DELAY OF THE PAROUSIA AND GENTILE INCLUSION IN THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS/MINAS

Our analysis has shown that the early Christian community came to understand the interim between Easter and the anticipated *Parousia* of Jesus Christ as a space of time during which Gentiles could be included in the predominantly Jewish movement. Though a case could be made for this thesis through the sayings of Jesus recorded in the Gospels and Epistles as summarized in Chapter One, our goal has been to instead argue this thesis by means of several literary motifs present in the parables of the Synoptic Gospels. In Chapters Five and Six, we demonstrated how the motifs of growth (in the parables of the Weeds and Wheat and the Mustard Seed) and wedding banquet (in the parable of the Wedding Feast/Great Banquet) connect the *Parousia*'s delay to the inclusion of Gentiles in the early Christian communities. The final motif which we will treat in our study of the parables is that of the "absent master." Though the absent master motif appears in many eschatologically-orientated parables addressing the delay of the *Parousia* (such as the parables of the Doorkeeper in Mark 13:34-37//Luke 12:35-38, the Wise and Foolish Servant in Matt 24:45-51//Luke 12:41-48, and Virgins in Matt 25:1-13), only in the parable of the Talents (Matt 25:14-30) or Minas¹ (Luke 19:11-27) does the connection emerge between delay and the possibility of Gentile inclusion in the early Christian communities.

I. Introduction: The Absent Master Motif and Allegory in the Parable of the Talents/Minas

Based on its usage in the early Christian literature, the image of the absent master is an exceedingly useful device to picque the eschatological sensibilities of readers and listeners. In addition to the eschatological parables mentioned above, the parable of the Tenants (Mark 12:1-

¹ We will use the term "minas" instead of the more popular term "pounds" in our analysis since Luke's Gospel itself uses the Greek term μνᾶ to refer to the item entrusted to the slaves by their master. The value of the pound, a unit of currency used by the United Kingdom, is drastically smaller than the 100 denarii equivalent to a mina during the first century. See Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1533. Thus, to refer to unit of money in Luke's parable as a "pound" leads to unnecessary confusion.

12//Matt 21:33-46//Luke 20:9-19) is another example of the absent master motif, though it is not connected to the *Parousia*.² The absent master motif also appears in the rabbinic parables which could indicate its popularity in Jewish circles during the decades preceding this movement's full flowering.³

Moreover, it seems that the absent master was an easily understood image in the milieu of the first century. In a time when vast tracks of land were owned by powerful aristocrats in areas under the influence and/or control of Rome and her proxies, absentee masters were a constant reality for slaves, lessees, and the public in general. William Herzog writes,

The head of the household could not stay home if he intended to protect his interests and expand his influence. Not only would he travel to his estates but he would travel abroad in hopes of increasing his investments, initiating new business schemes, building patron-client networks, currying favor with imperial overlords, or perhaps representing his city in some official capacity.⁴

When commercial or political concerns compelled the wealthy to travel (or indeed to reside on another estate entirely), they appointed trusted household servants or slaves to manage property and capital in their absence. Though holding a domestic status, such slaves or servants effectively became powerful bureaucrats, and, depending on the size of their master's property, could expect substantial personal financial gain.⁵

² See Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus*, 274. We argued in our discussion of the parable of the Tenants in chapter three that the departure of the master takes place allegorically in the era of Israel's prophets and not the apostolic era. Therefore, the Tenants parable cannot refer to the *Parousia*'s delay. [See chapter three, pages 116-124.](#)

³ Brad Young writes, "The theme of reward for faithful stewardship as well as the dramatic motifs of the master's departure into a faraway place and his return after a delay also appear in the rabbinic parables." Brad Young, *The Parables*, 89.

⁴ William R. Herzog, *Parables as Subversive Speech, Jesus as Pedagogue of the Oppressed* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster/John Knox, 1994), 157.

⁵ Herzog, *Parables*, 157.

Of course, absent masters had the expectation that their household slaves would manage their property well during their frequent long voyages. For this reason, many understand the message of the parable of Talents/Minas to be focused on stewardship. For example, Blomberg concludes, “Like the master, God entrusts all people with a portion of his resources, expecting them to act as good stewards of it.”⁶ Because of such an expectation, the masters’ voyages were in fact occasions for the testing of their servants or slaves.⁷ Would the servants or slaves seek the best interests of their masters’ property and capital during such voyages, some of which could even last years? Thus, the concepts of good stewardship and management have come to dominate the discourse about the parable of the Talents/Minas. In fact, under the powerful influence of this interpretation, even the term *talent* (τάλαντον) used by Matthew has come to denote in the English language “natural” or “innate gifts” to be managed for the common good instead of a quantity of money as it was in first century Palestine.⁸ If, however, the message of the parable of the Talents/Minas is simply a neutral concept like stewardship, why do so many scholars and lay-people have such a strong reaction to it?⁹ Perhaps there is more to the parable’s message than merely good management.

⁶ Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables*, 214.

⁷ According to Bernard Scott, “Departure is an essential element in the departure-return parables. A hearer knows from the beginning that this will be a test, and so the opening line invokes a repertoire dealing with stewardship.” Scott, *Hear Then a Parable*, 226.

⁸ Daniel J. Harrington, “Polemical Parables in Matthew 24-25,” *USQR* 44 (1991): 296, writes, “In the history of interpretation the Greek word for a large sum of money *talanton* came to be understood in the sense of ‘natural or God-given ability’ and the parable became the starting point for exhortations to use one’s talents to their maximum capacity.”

⁹ See J. Duncan M. Derrett, “A Horrid Passage in Luke Explained (Lk 19:27)” *ExpTim* 97 (1985-86): 136-138. On page 137, Derrett laments, “The idea of slaughtering helpless prisoners before the victorious king [i.e., the parable of the Minas] is very repulsive to us, recalling episodes within living memory, associated with a low level of civilization which we realize is only beneath the surface everywhere.” Schottroff, *The Parables of Jesus*, 3, similarly bemoans, “Should narratives about the capriciousness and brutality of the powerful be read as parables of God?” Schottroff similarly states on page 223, “The parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30) was the one that for a long time made me doubt the possibility of interpreting the kings and masters in the parables as God.” Many interpreters find the parable of the Talents/Minas so difficult that they discover innovative interpretations and explanations that better

The parable of the Talent/Minas is certainly among the most maligned of NT parables. Snodgrass writes, “These two parables [the Talents and Minas] have been strangely neglected, not even discussed by several books on parables, even though they are among the longer narrative parables and are clearly important for the Evangelists . . . to say nothing of the fact that many people do not like these parables.”¹⁰ The reason for such distaste is the unfairness and brutality of the absent master/king who in the Lukan version of the parable has his enemies slaughtered and in the Matthean version has the third servant who preserved his master’s capital faithfully cast into a dark place of torture. Some even in the early Christian community itself were uncomfortable with this appearance of unfairness and brutality as evidenced in modifications made to a third version of the parable found in a fragment of the apocryphal *Gospel of the Nazarenes*.¹¹ In a moment of transparency, J. Duncan Derrett confesses, “a gospel of peace and reconciliation hardly does well to end a magnificent parable with such a grisly threat, and I was for long unhappy about it.”¹² But by far the most serious accusation leveled at the parable of the Talents/Minas is the allegation of Anti-Semitism often made against Luke’s version.¹³ In order to understand how a parable like the Talents/Minas can be viewed in such a light, it is necessary to dig deeper into the redaction, context, organization, and challenging

comport with their concepts of God. Herzog, *Parables*, 152, acknowledges that the judgment of the parable of the Talents/Minas seems “puzzling to modern ears.”

¹⁰ Klyne Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 519.

¹¹ In a third version of the parable of the Talents/Minas preserved in a fragment of the *Gos. Naz.* in Eusebius’ *Theoph.*, the servant is imprisoned by the master because he “squandered his master’s substance with harlots and flute-girls.” In contrast, the servant who buries his talent is congratulated. Thus the *Gos. Naz.* removes some of the offensiveness by making the offending slave more worthy of punishment in the eyes of the readers.

¹² Derrett, “A Horrid Passage,” 137.

¹³ Jack Sanders, “The Parable of the Pounds and Lukan Anti-Semitism,” *TS* 42.4 (1981): 660-668. See also Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, 1233; Young, *Jesus and His Jewish Parables*, 167-168; and Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 536, 541. The adjective “Anti-Semitic” is a term coined before World War II during the rise of National Socialism in Germany. For this reason using it to describe a two-millennia-old piece of literature is anachronistic. Other authors prefer to use terms like “anti-Jewish” or “anti-Judaic” since these feelings have existed as long as the people of Israel have interacted with Gentile nations. See Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins*, 617-618.

metaphors contained therein. However, before we do this, we must make a few comments about the parable of the Talents/Minas as allegory.

Unlike the parables of the Soils and the Weeds and the Wheat, there is no compendium of allegorical equivalences to assist in interpretation.¹⁴ However, like the parable of the Great Banquet/Wedding Feast discussed in the preceding chapter, the parable of the Talents/Minas clearly has allegorical elements. As we will see in our discussion of the parable below, the two versions have both internal and contextual cues that point the reader in the direction of allegory.¹⁵ Ben Chenoweth writes, “It is widely recognised today that Jesus’ parables contain elements that were intended to be interpreted allegorically . . . The issue for the interpreter is, of course, which ones can be made legitimately.”¹⁶ While it will be a goal of this chapter to prove the identity of several of these allegorical elements with respect to our argument about delay and Gentile inclusion, it is convenient at the outset to lay the ground work by discussing a few of them in preparation.

There is fairly broad agreement that the parable of the Talents/Minas is an allegory about the interim period between Easter and the *Parousia* in which the early Christian community found itself. Thus, the absent master (Matt) or journeying crown-prince (Luke) of the Talents/Minas

¹⁴ See Mark 4:14-20//Matt 13:18-23//Luke 8:11-15 and Matt 13:38-39.

¹⁵ Below we will develop the allegorical significance of details in the parable of the Talents/Minas with regard to our argument about the connection between the delay of the *Parousia* and Gentile inclusion. Some examples of such details include (1) ὥσπερ γάρ in Matt 25:14, which connects the Matthean parable to the preceding allegory of the Virgins (25:1-13), (2) the reference to a long time (Matt 25:19: μετὰ δὲ πολλὸν χρόνον) and distant country (Luke 19:12: εἰς χώραν μακράν), and (3) the Lukan introductory verse implying concern about *Parousia* expectation (Luke 19:11: “the people thought the kingdom of God was going to appear at once”). Furthermore, the punishment of the third slave in Matt (25:30: “And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth”) and the reward of the first two (25:23: “Come and share your master’s happiness!”) suggests the Final Judgment. Finally, the story of the throne claimant in the Lukan version of the parable, which alludes to the acquisition of an ethnarchy in Judea by Herod the Great’s son, Archelaus, points beyond itself and to the identity of Jesus as God’s Son who will receive an eschatological kingdom.

¹⁶ Ben Chenoweth, “Identifying the Talents; Contextual Clues for the Interpretation of the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30),” *TynBul* 56.1 (2005): 62.

parable refers to Jesus Christ, the departure refers to the events of Good Friday/Easter and the Ascension, the long absence (Matt) or journey to a far country (Luke) refers to the delay, the master/king's return refers to the *Parousia*, and the servants represent the early Christian communities and/or their opponents. L. C. McGaughey writes, "In sum, both Matthew and Luke understand the parable as an apocalyptic warning about the conduct of the faithful during the delay of the parousia."¹⁷ Davies and Allison go much further in the introduction to their commentary on Matthew's parable:

Whether or not one uses the word allegory, this parable, like the preceding, is filled with obvious symbols. The master is Jesus. His slaves represent the church, whose members have received various responsibilities. The master's departure is the departure of the earthly Jesus. The long time of the master's absence is the age of the church. His return is the *Parousia* of the Son of man.¹⁸

Many other prominent commentators and scholars of Matthew and Luke essentially agree with Davies and Allison's assessment.¹⁹ As mentioned on numerous occasions, these allegorical identities function only on the level of the text as we have received it from Matthew, Luke, and their redactors. We make no claims as to whether the parable spoken by Jesus contained such allegorical equivalencies since many argue that in its most original form the parable was Jesus' admonition to his disciples to be wise in how they used the resources entrusted to them like *Torah* and the Kingdom of God.²⁰ Our goal is not to chart the development of a tradition, but rather to show the connection between the motifs of the *Parousia's* delay and Gentile inclusion

¹⁷ L. C. McGaughey, "The Fear of Yahweh and the Mission of Judaism: A Postexilic Maxim and Its Early Christian Expansion in the Parable of the Talents," *JBL* 94 (1975), 237-238.

¹⁸ Davies and Allison. *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew VIII-XVIII* (The International Critical Commentary; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 402.

¹⁹ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke X-XXIV*, 1232-1233; Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 702; Blomberg, *Parables*, 217; Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1531-32; Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 59; Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom*, 153; etc.

²⁰ Herzog, *Parables*, 153-154.

in the parables as we have received them. What we can say conclusively, however, is that the parables ascribed to Jesus, especially those containing the absent master motif, provided the early Christian movement an excellent forum to reflect on the *Parousia*'s delay and the identity of God's people as the parable of the Talents/Minas illustrates.

Having made the case for the allegorical significance of the parable in brief, we must admit that there are a number of influential voices against the supposition of allegory, especially in regard to the parable of the Minas.²¹ These scholars effectively argue that Luke's throne claimant in the parable of the Minas has nothing to do with the *Parousia*, but instead foreshadows Jesus' Jerusalem entry (Luke 19:28-44) where he will be rejected by the people whom he should by right rule as king.²² In our analysis of the throne-claimant features in Luke's parable of the Minas below, we will offer an evaluation of this argument. However, in preview, the close connection between the throne-claimant images and Luke's Jerusalem entry narrative (19:28-44) need not rule out a reference to the delay of the *Parousia* in the throne claimant's long journey to receive his kingship.

As we analyze the parable of the Talents/Minas, we will clearly see the theme of the *Parousia*'s delay in both versions. However, in comparison to the other parables we have studied, the presentation of Gentile inclusion is decidedly focused on the negative pole, i.e., the redefining of the people of God in a way that excludes some recalcitrant elements in Israel. It is

²¹ See Luke Timothy Johnson, "The Lukan Kingship Parable (Lk 19:11-27)," *NovT* 24.2 (1982): 139-159; Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 540; Brian Schultz, "Jesus as Archelaus in the Parable of the Pounds (Lk. 19:11-27)," *NovT* 49 (2007): 105-127; and Francis Weinert, "Parable of the Throne Claimant Reconsidered," *CBQ* 39 (1977): 505-514.

²² Adelbert Denaux, "The Parable of the King-Judge (Lk 19,12-28) and Its Relation to the Entry Story (Lk 19,29-44)," *ZAW* 93 (2002), 54, writes, "Nevertheless, from the moment one reads the story in relation to its context, especially the following Entry Story, then the parabolic narrative of Lk 19,12-27 clearly contains some allegorical aspects. The question still remains: which ones? The common allegorical interpretation, i.e. that Jesus goes to a far land (= his ascension), where he receives his kingship (= he is seated at God's right hand), and finally returns (= *parousia*) to judge the deeds of his disciples and his enemies during the time between the ascension and the *parousia*, is proven doubtful."

precisely for this reason that some have labeled the parable “Anti-Semitic.”²³ However, this does not mean that the Talents/Minas has nothing to contribute to the theme of Gentile inclusion.

Though the Talents/Minas parable does not refer to the inclusion of Gentiles as overtly as some of the other parables we have studied, it does lay the groundwork for their inclusion by constituting the people of God more broadly than *ethnicity*. Joseph Fitzmyer summarizes this concept from the Lukan point of view, “It [the parable of the Minas] fits in with, on the one hand, the Lucan theme of the rejection of Jesus (which has been evident since 4:16-30); but, on the other, by the contrast of the good servants and the enemies it suits the other Lucan theme of *reconstituting the people of God* [emphasis mine], which runs through his two volumes.”²⁴ A somewhat similar phenomenon appears in the parable of the Talents. Daniel J. Harrington argues that the Matthean community was one of many Jewish groups competing for influence in post-Second-Temple Judaism at the end of the first century.²⁵ According to this rationale, Matthew aimed the Talents parable at the “synagogue across the street” as both polemic against its rejection of the Christian message and as justification for his community’s openness to the inclusion of Gentiles.²⁶ According to these viewpoints on Luke and Matthew, the message of the

²³ For a list of authors who discuss the allegation of anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism in the parable of the Minas, see [footnote 13](#) above.

²⁴ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 1233.

²⁵ Harrington, “Polemical Parables,” 289-290.

²⁶ Harrington, “Polemical Parables,” 287, 297. As evidence of Matthew’s polemic against opposing synagogues in his community, Harrington notes Jesus’ interaction with the scribes and Pharisees, “Though granted some authority (23:3), the scribes and Pharisees are bitterly criticized as ‘blind guides.’ They appear to control ‘their synagogues’ (4:23; 9:35; 10:17; 12:9; 13:54), which are condemned as the ‘synagogues of the hypocrites’ (6:2, 5; 23:6, 34). Christian missionaries seem to have been flogged at such synagogues (10:17; 23:34) and run out of town by their leaders (10:23; 23:34). It is against this background of rivalry among Jewish groups (one of which was the Matthean community) that we need to understand Matthew’s theological program, since it was intended to preserve and continue the heritage of Judaism after A.D. 70.” See also F. P. Viljoen, “Matthew, the Church and Anti-Semitism” in *The Gospel of Matthew at the Crossroads of Early Christianity* (ed. Donald Senior; Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2011), 681, who writes, “The Matthean Gospel should be read as a transparent story on two levels. On the first level Matthew tells how Jesus was rejected and executed in Israel while he pronounced judgment on Israel’s

parable isn't merely that Jesus Christ expects good stewardship of *Torah*, the Kingdom of God, or any other resource the Christian community possesses. The message is that anyone who receives these resources and uses them appropriately *constitutes the eschatological people of God awaiting the Parousia*, even those who are not part of ethnic Israel.²⁷ This negative pole represents the *possibility of Gentile inclusion* instead of the realization of it as we have seen in some other parables we have studied.

With these introductory comments in place, we can begin our analysis of the parable of the Talents/Minas in view of the themes of the delay of the *Parousia* and the possibility of Gentile inclusion. First, we will reflect on the relationship of the parable of the Talents (Matt) and Minas (Luke) to one another (redaction). Secondly, we will study the contexts of the two versions of the parable. Third, we will discern their organization. Fourth, we will dig deeply into four problems of interpretation in the parable. Fifth, by way of brief excursus, we will take a look at two other early Christian interpretations of our parable. Finally, we will summarize the message of the parable of the Talents/Minas. As has been our practice, all our comments in these sections will focus on the connection with the themes of delay and Gentile inclusion.

II. The Relationship of the Parable of the Talents (Matt) and Minas (Luke) to One Another (Redaction)

leaders and its people and commissioned his disciples to preach to the Gentiles. On the second level he tells the story of the church's commitment to Jesus which resulted in its separation from the synagogue and the forming of a new community of Christian believers."

²⁷ Blomberg, *Parables*, 221, captures this point well in his summary of the message of the parable of the Talents/Minas, "The two main points corresponding to these larger groups of characters therefore involve (1) *the punishment awaiting those in Israel who explicitly reject God's kingship* as well as (2) *the need for his apparently obedient servants to exercise good stewardship lest they too find themselves cut off from his blessing* [emphasis his]. The point corresponding to the master remains much the same as in Matthew, though perhaps with a more direct link to Jesus' ministry: (3) *God has acted in Jesus to gain the Lordship over all, but his complete dominion still awaits future conquest* [emphasis his]." The confluence of the concepts of punishment for some in Israel who refuse to receive the message of Jesus coupled with the eschatological reward for obedient management of the master's resources means that *anyone* keeping faith with the master will be rewarded at the *Parousia*.

Like the parable of the Wedding Feast/Great Banquet, the parable of the Talents/Minas is a double-tradition parable attested in Matthew and Luke. A third attestation of the parable appears as a fragment of the *Gos. Naz.* known only through Eusebius' work, *Theoph.*²⁸ Since this portion of the lost *Gos. Naz.* is dependent on Matthew,²⁹ we will not consider the attestation as a third version, but will merely use it for illustrative purposes later in this chapter.

The two versions of the parable show considerable diversity in terms of language and details (see the grey portions of figure one below).³⁰ Of the 301 words in Matthew's version and the 281 words in Luke's, only fifty words are identical and ten come from common cognates.³¹ What then is the literary relationship between the two? One obvious option is that the two parables represent the same story told on two different occasions and preserved in two different sources.³² A second possibility is that the parable represents one story told by Jesus and preserved either (a)

²⁸ Eusebius, *Theoph.*, writes, "But since the Gospel [written] in Hebrew characters which has come into our hands enters the threat not against the man who had hid [the talent], but against him who had lived dissolutely—for he [the master] had three servants: one who squandered his master's substance with harlots and flute-girls, one who multiplied the gain, and one who hid the talent; and accordingly one was accepted (with joy), another merely rebuked, but the other cast into prison—I wonder whether in Matthew the threat which is uttered after the word against the man who did nothing may refer not to him, but by epanalepsis to the first who had feasted and drunk with the drunken." Wilhelm Schneemelcher, ed., *New Testament Apocrypha* (2 vols; Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1991), 1:161-162.

²⁹ Petri Luomanen, *Recovering Jewish Christian Sects and Gospels* (SVC 110; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 131-132. Schneemelcher, ed., *New Testament Apocrypha*, 1:159-160.

³⁰ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 1228.

³¹ Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 523. The results of Denaux's word study are slightly different: "The Matthean and Lukan versions of this pericope have ten sentences in common: nine Jesus sayings and one logion (Mt 25,29 par. Lk 19,26). Matthew's version of the parable contains 247 words, 230 of which are in Jesus sayings and 17 in a logion. Luke's version has 211 words: 195 in Jesus sayings and 16 in a logion. Of these totals, only 46 words are common to both versions or . . . 19% in Mt and 22% in Lk." A. Denaux, "The Parable of the Talents/Pounds (Q 19,12-27); A Reconstruction of the Q Text," in *The Sayings Source Q and the Historical Jesus* (ed. A. Lindemann; Leuven: Peeters, 2001), 429-430.

³² Schultz, "Jesus as Archelaus," 105-106.

by different traditions such as Luke and Matthew's special material (L and M)³³ or (b) by their common source (Q),³⁴ though perhaps in two slightly different recensions.³⁵

Despite the differences, the versions found in Luke and Matthew contain enough similarities to suggest that they originate in a common source (Q) redacted by each author for his own literary purposes.³⁶ For example, after setting aside the first few verses and the last verse of the Matthean and Lukan versions, 25:19-29 of Matthew strongly resembles 19:15-26 of Luke (see the bold Greek text in figure one below).³⁷ The materials removed in this scheme strongly bear

³³ Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 525. Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 733, writes, "Despite the strong similarities, therefore, it is by no means certain that Matthew's and Luke's source is Q. Unfortunately, one can only speculate about sources here, but it is difficult to explain either Matthew or Luke as a wholesale redaction of Q. It seems only plausible to argue that, unless Jesus spoke two similar parables, both passages go back originally to the same parable and that early in the process of transmission the parable assumed something like the two forms we encounter in Matthew and Luke and thus that there is not direct literary dependence upon Q here."

³⁴ Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom*, 218 and Denaux, "The Parable of the King-Judge," 39.

³⁵ Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 701-702, writes, "We may take it, therefore, that one original parable lies behind the two versions, although it is not absolutely excluded that Jesus himself told two similar parables on different occasions . . . Probably, however, we have further evidence for the two recensions of the Q material which have been detected elsewhere in the course of this commentary. It is less likely that the parable is from Luke's special source, since there is no real link with the preceding story of Zacchaeus, and the content of the parable is closer to the themes found in Q." See also Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1527-28.

³⁶ Kloppenborg has included the parable of the Talents/Minas among the Gospel material tracing its existence back to Q. See Kloppenborg, *Q Parallels*, 201-203. Robinson, *et al.* eds., *The Critical Edition of Q*, 525-557, offer the following reconstruction of Q: "A certain person, on taking a trip [ἀποδημῶν], called ten of his slaves [δέκα δούλους] and gave them ten minas and said to them: 'Do business until I come.' After a long time [μετὰ πολὺν χρόνον] the master of those slaves comes and settles accounts [συναίρει] with them. The first came saying: 'Master, your mina has produced ten more minas.' And he said to him: 'Well done, good slave [ἀγαθὲ δοῦλε], you have been faithful over a pittance, I will set you over much.' And the second came saying: 'Master, your mina has earned five minas.' He said to him: 'Well done, good slave [ἀγαθὲ δοῦλε], you have been faithful over a pittance, I will set you over much.' And the other came saying: 'Master, I knew you, that you are a hard person [σκληρός], reaping where you did not sow [θερίζων ὅπου οὐκ ἔσπειρας] and gathering up from where you did not winnow [συνάγων ὅθεν οὐ διεσκόρπισας]; and, scared [φοβηθεὶς], I went and hid your mina in the ground. Here, you have what belongs to you.' He said to him, 'Wicked slave [πονηρὲ δοῦλε]! You knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather up from where I have not winnowed? Then you had to invest my money with the money changers! And at my coming I would have received what belongs to me plus interest [τόκῳ]. So take from him the mina and give it to the one who has ten minas.' For to everyone who has will be given; but from the one who does not have, even what he had will be taken from him [τῷ γὰρ ἔχοντι παντὶ δοθήσεται, δὲ τοῦ μὴ ἔχοντος καὶ ὃ ἔχει ἀρθήσεται ἀπ' αὐτοῦ]." Our perspective is essentially that advanced by Denaux, "The Parable of the King-Judge," 39. It is reasonable to assume that the parable existed in Q, though we have no opinion on the issue of different recensions proposed by Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 701-702.

³⁷ Denaux, "The Parable of the Talents/Pounds," 432-433, argues that the Q-parable had a simple introduction (e.g., εἶπεν) which Luke has augmented for literary reasons. In contrast, Matt has shortened Q's introduction to fit the parable of the Talents into his pattern already established in the Eschatological Discourse.

the mark of Lukan or Matthean redaction such as Luke's opening verse (19:11), the throne claimant images (19:12, 14, 27), and Matthew's concluding judgment (25:30).³⁸ In the following paragraphs we will first analyze the evidence that the versions of the parable of the Talents/Minas are independent. Next we will observe evidence that establishes shared dependency on Q, including the evidence presented in figure one below. Finally, we will make comments on unique Matthean and Lukan features that relate to the delay of the *Parousia* and the possibility of Gentile inclusion.

Figure One: A Synopsis of the Parable of the Talents and Minas		
Parable of the Talents Matt 25:14-30		Parable of the Minas Luke 19:11-27
<p>Matthew connects to the parable of the Virgins with ὥσπερ γάρ.</p> <p>Luke, on the other hand, makes a geographic connection ("near Jerusalem") and a narrative connection ("While they were listening to these things") to the Zacchaeus account (taking place in Jericho) and to the rest of the Lukan Travel Narrative.</p>	11a	Ἀκούοντων δὲ αὐτῶν ταῦτα
	11b	προσθεὶς εἶπεν παραβολὴν διὰ τὸ ἐγγὺς εἶναι Ἱερουσαλὴμ αὐτόν
	11c-e	καὶ δοκεῖν αὐτοὺς ὅτι παραχρῆμα μέλλει ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ ἀναφαίνεσθαι.
	12a-b	εἶπεν οὖν· ἄνθρωπός τις εὐγενὴς ἐπορεύθη εἰς χώραν μακρὰν λαβεῖν ἑαυτῷ βασιλείαν καὶ ὑποστρέψαι.
14a	"Ὡσπερ γάρ ἄνθρωπος ἀποδημῶν ἐκάλεσεν τοὺς ἰδίους δούλους	13a καλέσας δὲ δέκα δούλους ἑαυτοῦ ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς δέκα μνᾶς
14b	καὶ παρέδωκεν αὐτοῖς τὰ ὑπάρχοντα αὐτοῦ,	13b-c καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς αὐτούς· πραγματεύσασθε ἐν ᾧ ἔρχομαι.
15a-d	καὶ ᾧ μὲν ἔδωκεν πέντε τάλαντα, ᾧ δὲ δύο, ᾧ δὲ ἓν	The concept of ability is not present in the Lukan parable. All the slaves are given the same amount.
15e	ἐκάστῳ κατὰ τὴν ἰδίαν δύναμιν, καὶ ἀπεδήμησεν.	
Matthew doesn't mention the Throne Claimant		14a οἱ δὲ πολῖται αὐτοῦ ἐμίσουν αὐτόν
		14b ἀπέστειλαν πρεσβείαν ὀπίσω αὐτοῦ λέγοντες·
		14c οὐ θέλομεν τοῦτον βασιλεῦσαι ἐφ' ἡμᾶς.
16a	εὐθέως πορευθεὶς ὁ τὰ πέντε τάλαντα λαβὼν	Luke has no report of the investment of the entrusted money.
16b	ἠργάσατο ἐν αὐτοῖς	
16c	καὶ ἐκέρδησεν ἄλλα πέντε	

³⁸ Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew XIX-XXVIII*, 403, writes, "Luke's parable of the claimant is secondary because when it is removed, the story reads much like Matthew's."

17a	ὥσαύτως ὁ τὰ δύο		
17b	ἐκέρδησεν ἄλλα δύο		
18a	ὁ δὲ τὸ ἐν λαβὼν ἀπελθὼν ὥρυξεν γῆν		
18b	καὶ ἔκρυσεν τὸ ἀργύριον τοῦ κυρίου αὐτοῦ.		
19a	μετὰ δὲ πολὺν χρόνον ἔρχεται ὁ κύριος τῶν δοῦλων ἐκείνων	15a-b	καὶ ἐγένετο ἐν τῷ ἐπανελθεῖν αὐτὸν λαβόντα τὴν βασιλείαν
19b	καὶ συναίρει λόγον μετ' αὐτῶν.	15c e f g	καὶ εἶπεν φωνηθῆναι αὐτῷ τοὺς δοῦλους τούτους οἷς δεδώκει τὸ ἀργύριον, ἵνα γνοῖ τί διεπραγματεύσαντο.
20a	καὶ προσελθὼν ὁ τὰ πέντε τάλαντα λαβὼν προσήνεγκεν ἄλλα πέντε τάλαντα λέγων	16a	παρεγένετο δὲ ὁ πρῶτος λέγων .
20b	ἴδε ἄλλα πέντε τάλαντα ἐκέρδησα.	16b	κύριε , ἡ μνᾶ σου δέκα προσηργάσατο μνᾶς
21a-b	ἔφη αὐτῷ ὁ κύριος αὐτοῦ· εὖ, δοῦλε ἀγαθὲ καὶ πιστέ	17a	καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ· εὖγε, ἀγαθὲ δοῦλε
21c-e	ἐπὶ ὀλίγα ἤς πιστός ἐπὶ πολλῶν σε καταστήσω εἴσελθε εἰς τὴν χαρὰν τοῦ κυρίου σου.	17b-c	ὅτι ἐν ἐλαχίστῳ πιστός ἐγένετο, ἴσθι ἐξουσίαν ἔχων ἐπάνω δέκα πόλεων.
22a-c	προσελθὼν [δὲ] καὶ ὁ τὰ δύο τάλαντα εἶπεν κύριε , δύο τάλαντά μοι παρέδωκας δε ἄλλα δύο τάλαντα ἐκέρδησα.	18a-b	καὶ ἦλθεν ὁ δεύτερος λέγων · ἡ μνᾶ σου, κύριε , ἐποίησεν πέντε μνᾶς.
23a-b	ἔφη αὐτῷ ὁ κύριος αὐτοῦ· εὖ, δοῦλε ἀγαθὲ καὶ πιστέ ,	19a	εἶπεν δὲ καὶ τούτῳ·
23c-e	ἐπὶ ὀλίγα ἤς πιστός , ἐπὶ πολλῶν σε καταστήσω· εἴσελθε εἰς τὴν χαρὰν τοῦ κυρίου σου.	19b	καὶ σὺ ἐπάνω γίνου πέντε πόλεων.
24a	προσελθὼν δὲ καὶ ὁ τὸ ἐν τάλαντον εἰληφώς εἶπεν ·	20a	καὶ ὁ ἕτερος ἦλθεν λέγων ·
24b-e	κύριε , ἔγνων σε ὅτι σκληρὸς εἶ ἄνθρωπος , θερίζων ὅπου οὐκ ἔσπειρας καὶ συνάγων ὅθεν οὐ διεσκόρπισας,	20b-d	κύριε , ἰδοὺ ἡ μνᾶ σου ἣν εἶχον ἀποκειμένην ἐν σουδαρίῳ·
25a 25b 25c	καὶ φοβηθεὶς ἀπελθὼν ἔκρυσεν τὸ τάλαντόν σου ἐν τῇ γῇ· ἴδε ἔχεις τὸ σόν.	21a b c d	ἐφοβούμεν γάρ σε ὅτι ἄνθρωπος αὐστηρὸς εἶ, αἵρεις ὃ οὐκ ἔθηκας καὶ θερίζεις ὃ οὐκ ἔσπειρας .
26a	ἀποκριθεὶς δὲ ὁ κύριος αὐτοῦ εἶπεν αὐτῷ ·	22a	λέγει αὐτῷ ·
26b-d	πονηρὲ δοῦλε καὶ ὀκνηρὲ, ἦδεις ὅτι θερίζω ὅπου οὐκ ἔσπειρα καὶ συνάγω ὅθεν οὐ διεσκόρπισα;	22b e f g h	ἐκ τοῦ στόματός σου κρινῶ σε, πονηρὲ δοῦλε . ἦδεις ὅτι ἐγὼ ἄνθρωπος αὐστηρὸς εἰμι, αἵρων ὃ οὐκ ἔθηκα καὶ θερίζω ὃ οὐκ ἔσπειρα ;
27a	ἔδει σε οὖν βαλεῖν τὰ ἀργύριά μου τοῖς τραπεζίταις ,	23a	καὶ διὰ τί οὐκ ἔδωκάς μου τὸ ἀργύριον ἐπὶ τράπεζαν ;
27b	καὶ ἐλθὼν ἐγὼ ἐκομισάμην ἂν τὸ ἐμὸν σὺν τόκῳ .	23b	κἀγὼ ἐλθὼν σὺν τόκῳ ἂν αὐτὸ ἔπραξα.
		24a	καὶ τοῖς παρεστῶσιν εἶπεν·
28a	ἄρατε οὖν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ τὸ τάλαντον	24b	ἄρατε ἀπ' αὐτοῦ τὴν μνᾶν
28b	καὶ τῷ ἔχοντι τὰ δέκα τάλαντα·	24c	καὶ δότε τῷ τὰς δέκα μνᾶς ἔχοντι
	Matthew has no objection	25a-b	καὶ εἶπαν αὐτῷ· κύριε, ἔχει δέκα μνᾶς -
29a	τῷ γὰρ ἔχοντι παντὶ δοθήσεται	26a	λέγω ὑμῖν

			ὅτι παντὶ τῷ ἔχοντι δοθήσεται
29b	καὶ περισσευθήσεται,		
29c	τοῦ δὲ μὴ ἔχοντος	26b	ἀπὸ δὲ τοῦ μὴ ἔχοντος
29d	ἀρθήσεται ἀπ' αὐτοῦ καὶ ὁ ἔχει	26c	καὶ ὁ ἔχει ἀρθήσεται.
30a	καὶ τὸν ἀχρεῖον δοῦλον ἐκβάλετε εἰς τὸ σκότος τὸ ἐξώτερον· ἐκεῖ	27a	πλὴν τοὺς ἐχθροὺς μου τούτους τοὺς μὴ θελήσαντάς με βασιλεῦσαι ἐπ' αὐτοὺς
30b	ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων.	27b c	ἀγάγετε ὧδε καὶ κατασφάξατε αὐτοὺς ἔμπροσθέν μου.

A. Indications that the Parable of the Talents and Minas Are Independent

There is considerable evidence that Matthew and Luke's versions of the Talents/Minas parable are independent based on some differences between them. In his reflection on the relationship between the two versions, Snodgrass capitulates to preponderance of differences and claims, "Any thought of moving back to some pristine original must be given up."³⁹ In his summary of authors who argue both for and against the existence of a common source for the parable of the Talents/Minas, Kloppenborg notes, "The relatively slight degree of verbal agreement is most often cited as the reason for excluding the pericope from Q."⁴⁰ Below is a list of some of the differences between the two parables.

Figure Two: Significant Differences between Matthew and Luke's Version of the Parable of Talents/Minas⁴¹	
Matt 25:14-30	Luke 19:11-27
Matthew's parable appears in the eschatological discourse after the Jerusalem entry.	Luke's parable appears at the end of the Travel Narrative before the Jerusalem entry.
Matthew has a simple introduction (ὥσπερ γάρ) connecting the Talents parable to the preceding Virgins parable (v. 14).	Luke has geographical introduction referring to a trip from Jericho to Jerusalem (v. 11), the final portion of the Lukan Travel Narrative.
A man goes on voyage (v. 14) and is gone for a	A man <i>of noble birth</i> goes to a distant country

³⁹ Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 530.

⁴⁰ Kloppenborg, *Q Parallels*, 200.

⁴¹ See Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 523-525, for another more exhaustive table of differences between Luke and Matt's versions of the parable.

long time (v. 19).	to receive a kingdom (v. 12).
The three slaves receive <i>talents</i> (five, two and one respectively) according to their ability (v. 15).	Each of ten slaves receive <i>one mina</i> (v. 13).
There is a report about how the slaves worked with the talents, including an account of one slave who buried it (vv. 16-18).	The slaves are told to work with their money (v. 13).
After a long time the man returns home (v. 19).	A delegation is sent to contest the nobleman's appointment, but the nobleman returns home a king anyway (vv. 14-15).
The first two servants are rewarded by "coming to share in the master's happiness" because they doubled their talents (vv. 20-23).	First two servants are rewarded with cities after providing the master with a 1000% and a 500% return on his investment (vv. 16-19).
The third servant reports that he buried his talent (v. 25).	The third servant reports that he hid his talent in a piece of cloth (v. 20).
There is no objection to the repossession of the third servant's talent.	Others object to the repossession of the third servant's mina (v. 25).
The third servant is cast out into the outer darkness, "Where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth" (v. 30).	The delegation that opposed the Master's kingship is brought forward to be slaughtered (v. 27).

As we reflect on figure two above, a number of significant differences between Matthew and Luke leap out. We will begin by considering Luke's narrative introduction in 19:11.

The overwhelming majority of commentators acknowledge that the introductory verse of the parable of the Minas (19:11) is of Lukan composition.⁴² It is full of Lukan language and themes.⁴³ For example, 19:11 contains a reference to the narrative of Jesus' travel to Jerusalem

⁴² Schultz, "Jesus as Archelaus," 112, writes, "Most commentators agree that v. 11, the introduction leading into Jesus' parable, is a Lukan creation, implying that it does not necessarily reflect an original setting in which Jesus would have uttered even an early form of the Parable of the Pounds." Denaux, "The Parable of the King-Judge," 56, writes, "The introductory verse, Lk 19:11, is a redactional composition through which the author offers a key to the interpretation of the parable. Lk 19,11 shows a remarkable number of Lukan characteristics." See also Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*; 1531; Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 537-558; Sanders, "The Parable of the Pounds," 665; Boucher, *The Parables*, 143; Fitzmyer, *Luke*, 1231.

⁴³ Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 537-538, notes, "Because of the number of Lukanisms, this narrative seam is almost certainly from Luke." See also Denaux, "The Parable of the King-Judge," 46: "The introductory verse, Lk 19:11, is a redactional composition through which the author offers a key to the interpretation of the parable. Lk 19,11 shows a remarkable number of Lukan characteristics."

(διὰ τὸ ἐγγὺς εἶναι Ἱερουσαλήμ) which began in 9:51 and of which the parable of the Minas is the final element.⁴⁴ Thus, according to Luke, Jesus tells the parable either at the beginning or during the seventeen-mile (27 km) uphill trek from Jericho in the Jordan Valley to Jerusalem in the Judean hills.⁴⁵ Secondly, Luke engineers the introductory phrase, “While they were listening to this” (literally: “these things” or ταῦτα), to connect the parable of the Minas with the Zacchaeus episode in 19:1-10.⁴⁶ Finally, the reference to eschatological expectation, “the people thought the kingdom of God [ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ] was going to appear at once [παραχρῆμα ἀναφαίνεσθαι],” also advocates for Lukan origin.⁴⁷ On the surface, 19:11 very much resembles Luke’s introduction to the parable of the Great Banquet in 14:15 as it offers an eschatological “interpretational key” for the parable.⁴⁸ In contrast, Matthew’s simple introduction in 25:14 is much closer to his source.

Another significant redactional difference is the fact that the master bestows *talents* on his slaves (25:15) in Mathew as opposed to *minas* in Luke. There is a vast difference between the value of the sum the master/king entrusts to his slaves in Matthew and Luke. The value of a talent⁴⁹ was roughly 6000 denarii whereas the mina was worth about 100.⁵⁰ A denarius is

⁴⁴ Sanders, “The Parable of the Pounds,” 667.

⁴⁵ Hultgren, *Parables*, 284.

⁴⁶ Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus*, 314.

⁴⁷ Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, 703, proposes, “From the point of view of Luke’s readers it is possible that the verse is meant to contradict the view that the resurrection appearances of Jesus constituted the revelation of the Kingdom of God . . . The parable itself, however, assumes the fact of an interval before the end.”

⁴⁸ Luke 14:15: “When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, ‘Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God.’”

⁴⁹ A talent was actually a weight, most often in silver, though it could denote other precious or semi-precious metals. Some suggest that a talent could have weighed between 50 and 75 pounds (22.5-34 kg). See Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew XIX-XXVIII*, 405 and Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 734.

⁵⁰ Hultgren, *Parables*, 274-275, 285.

considered the value of one day's hire for an unskilled laborer.⁵¹ Matthew's first slave, who received five talents, has been entrusted with an enormous sum. The term "talents" is most likely Matthean hyperbole,⁵² especially in view of v. 21 and 23 ("You have been faithful [πιστός] with *a few things* [ὀλίγα]) which resemble Luke 19:17 ("You have been trustworthy [πιστός] in a very *small matter* [ἐν ἐλαχίστῳ]).⁵³ Referring to the five talents given to Matthew's first slave (equal to three life-times of work for an unskilled laborer⁵⁴) as "a few things" is of course a monumental understatement.⁵⁵ Since this doubly-attested phrase in 25:21, 23 (=Luke 19:17) likely comes from the tradition, we can suppose that the amount of money was closer to Luke's mina rather than the massive sum of Matthew's talent. The significance of the talent for our argument about Gentile inclusion will be discussed below.

Another difference between Matthew and Luke which recommends itself for further study is small but extremely significant—the long absence of the Matthean master (25:19: μετὰ δὲ πολὺν χρόνον) and the Lukan master's journey to a distant country (19:12: ἐπορεύθη εἰς χώραν μακράν). The Lukan reference to a distant country is part of the throne claimant metaphor in which a man of noble birth goes on a journey to be made king. Also, in Luke-Acts πορεύομαι is a euphemism for death (e.g., 22:22; 22:33; Acts 1:25; cf. Matt 25:41).⁵⁶ Therefore, the master's

⁵¹ Allen C. Myers, ed., "Denarius," *EBD* 279.

⁵² See also Matt 18:24. James Swanson, "τάλαντον," *DBL* (electronic ed.).

⁵³ Schultz, "Jesus as Archelaus," 125, notes, "Matthew says that the first two were faithful with 'a little,' yet the amount they receive was huge. Luke's parable makes more sense because the slaves are given a little."

⁵⁴ A simple calculation (30,000 [5 talents x 6000 denarii] ÷ {365 days x 6/7 [taking into account the Sabbath] x 35 years [average life-expectancy] x 1 denarius per day}) reveals that five talents is equal to the value of *three life-times* of work for an unskilled laborer.

⁵⁵ Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 735.

⁵⁶ Friedrich Hauck and Seigfried Schulz, "πορεύομαι, κτλ" *TDNT* 6:574-575, claims, "As in the LXX πορεύομαι has in the NT the sense of 'going to death,' 'passing away.' Nevertheless, the NT does not share the OT view of this as expressed in resignation and lamentation, Jesus as the earthly Son of Man regards His going to death as the way which God has divinely appointed for Him for the saving of man (κατὰ τὸ ὀρισμένον πορεύεται, Lk. 22:22)."

“going on a long journey” is a Lukan allusion to the crucifixion/resurrection and not part of the source which presumably located the parable within the context of Jesus’ normal ministry instead of his Passion.⁵⁷ In this way the Lukan master’s long voyage compels the reader to search for a deeper meaning outside of the parable’s own narrative horizon by hinting at the connections between the throne claimant and Jesus’ death, resurrection, and the interim period before the *Parousia*. In Matthew, the term χρόνος, present also in the previous two pericopae (24:48 and 25:5) to which the parable of the Talents is closely related, refers to the delay of the *Parousia*. Most consider it a Matthean allegorical addition.⁵⁸ It is possible that in the original context of the parable it could merely have referred to “some length of time [that] was required for the servants to carry out their responsibilities.”⁵⁹ Whatever the origin of the term, the fact that it appears in all three *Parousia* parables (i.e., the parables of the Wise and Foolish Servant in 24:45-51 and the Virgins in 25:1-13) implies that it is a Matthean redaction.⁶⁰

Yet another difference between Luke and Matthew is the report in Matt 25:16-18 of how the three slaves employed the capital of their master. While the Lukan version has no report of what the slaves actually did with their trust before the reckoning, it does indicate that the master gave instruction to the slaves in 19:13 to put his money to use until his return (πραγματεύσασθε ἐν ᾧ ἔρχομαι). While it is difficult to say which version is most original, Matthew’s greatly expanded

⁵⁷ Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1532, suggests, “This detail corresponds theologically to Jesus’ death and resurrection, where authority is received as a result of exaltation . . . the use of πορεύομαι anticipates the description in 22:22 of Jesus proceeding to his death and makes another connection to the period of Jesus’ death and resurrection.” See also Manson, *Sayings*, 314.

⁵⁸ Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew XIX-XXVIII*, 407. Denaux, “The Parable of the Talents/Minas,” 441, differs. He argues, “Other authors believe that the expression ‘after a long time’ is a clear allusion to the Parousia, thus making in an allegorical addition, which may then imply that it is redactional. Nevertheless, allegorical features could already have been present in the primitive parable.” Robinson, *et al.*, eds., *The Critical Edition of Q*, 532, suggest that there is a moderate degree of uncertainty that μετὰ πολὺν χρόνον existed in Q.

⁵⁹ Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 532.

⁶⁰ Young, *The Parables*, 84-85.

report of the slaves' activities in 25:16-18 suggests redaction.⁶¹ On the other hand, Luke's imperative in 19:13 to "put the money to work" seems like a justification for the master's harsh judgment of the third slave in 19:20-24.⁶² Likely, in Q there was neither a command from the master (Luke 19:13) nor a report of the slaves' activities with their trust (Matt 25:16-18) before the master's reckoning (Matt 25:19-25//Luke 19:16-21), a scene which is present in Luke and Matthew.

However, what is most significant for our argument about the Gentile inclusion is Matthew's report about the third slave's actions in 25:18, "But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money." In contrast, according to Luke's account the third slave simply wraps his mina in a piece of cloth (σουδάριον or "napkin") and sets it aside (19:20). Schultz claims that Luke's account makes more sense, "Matthew's slaves are not told to do business with the money, so why should the third servant be punished for burying the money?"⁶³ In our discussion on four challenges of interpretation below, we will address at length the behavior of the third slave with his trust (burying of the talent in Matthew versus Luke's hiding of the mina in a napkin) and its significance for the message of the parable.⁶⁴ In summary, it is impossible to know whether the original source contained a report of

⁶¹ Robinson, *et al.* eds., *The Critical Edition of Q*, 528, omit the text of Matt 25:16-18 from their Q-reconstruction. Denaux, "The Parable of the Talents/Minas," 440, notes, "In 25,16-18 Mt introduces a narrative anticipation of the threefold conversation which follows: these verses are redactional. The redactional character can be confirmed by word statistics and by Matthew's preference for triads." Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew XIX-XXVIII*, 406, writes, "If Luke or his tradition did not abbreviate, then Matthew added the three verses. The latter possibility is supported by the word statistics and by Matthew's love of the triad."

⁶² Hultgren, *Parables*, 286. Robinson, *et al.* eds., *The Critical Edition of Q*, 526, are uncertain whether the Lukan Jesus' command to work with the money ever existed in Q.

⁶³ Schultz, "Jesus as Archelaus," 125.

⁶⁴ According to Jewish practice there was a moral distinction made between the burying of treasure and the mere concealing of it. Essentially, the burying of treasure absolved the managing party of liability for loss while in other forms of concealment the managing party remained responsible. McGaughey, "The Fear of Yahweh," 242. See also Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew XIX-XXVIII*, 407, "Burying money in the ground to hide it was reckoned good security against theft," and Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom*, 216, "Did the

the slaves' use of the capital (Matt 25:16-18). However, the detail of the buried talent (v. 18) is significant for Matthew's account and for our argument below.

Perhaps the most stunning and substantial redactional differences between the two versions of the parable of Talents/Minas are Luke's throne-claimant images interspersed throughout his version of the parable.⁶⁵ When removed from their contexts and placed together, the throne-claimant images form a coherent story and, for this reason, are sometimes referred to as the parable of the Throne-Claimant.⁶⁶

Figure 3: The Throne-Claimant in Luke's Parable of the Minas (19:11-27)	
v. 12	"A man of noble birth [ἄνθρωπός τις εὐγενής] went to a distant country [εἰς χώραν μακράν] to have himself appointed king and then to return." ⁶⁷
vv. 14-15b	"But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, 'We don't want this man to be our king.' He was made king, however, and returned home."
v. 27	"But those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them—bring them here and kill them in front of me."
Additional details from the Minas parable influenced by the throne claimant image:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ten servants receive minas (v. 13) instead of three in Matthew.⁶⁸ 2. The first two servants receive cities as rewards (vv. 17, 19).⁶⁹ 3. Other servants are told to take the third servant's mina (v. 24) and object to the command (v. 25).⁷⁰ 	

third servant bury his talent as Matthew states (v.18), or did he put it in a *soudarion*, a kerchief, as Luke says (v. 20)? If he acted as a responsible Jew, he would have buried it."

⁶⁵ Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 215.

⁶⁶ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 1231.

⁶⁷ Note that the voyage and return of the master is a key part of both the throne-claimant image and the broader story in parable of the Minas.

⁶⁸ Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 536, observes, "The reward of cities stems directly from the throne claimant imagery."

⁶⁹ Marshall, *Luke*, notes, "Luke gives the new sphere of authority as ten cities, corresponding to the ten minas. This is a disproportionate reward, which brings out the principle, 'faithful in little, great reward', and does not fit the picture of the wealthy master, although it does fit the picture of the nobleman, now become a king."

⁷⁰ Probably not much can be made of v. 25 since there are several textual witnesses that do not even include it in the parable. The most likely reason why the manuscripts omit v. 25 is that the first servant actually had 11 minas before receiving the mina of the third servant. See Blomberg, *Parables*, 219 and Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 527.

Many commentators see the throne-claimant images as insertions from Luke's special material (L).⁷¹ The most compelling evidence that the throne-claimant images are secondary is the fact that, when removed, as we have done in the table above, two independent and self-contained stories emerge.⁷² After removing the throne-claimant images, the outline of the remaining parable of the Minas strongly resembles that of Matthew's Talents: (1) the departure of a master; (2) trust given to three slaves; (3) the return of the master and his accounting; (4) reward of the first two servants; (5) judgment and punishment of the third; and (5) a concluding logion.⁷³ Thus it appears that Luke inserted the throne-claimant images into a pre-existing narrative (Q) resembling Matthew's parable of the Talents.⁷⁴

A second piece of evidence is the fact that the throne-claimant images have the effect of allegorizing the parable, "When the story is taken as an allegorical allusion to Jesus' departure, enthronement, and return as Son of Man in judgment, the royal figure becomes none other than Christ himself, and his reckoning, the parousia. That Luke viewed it in this latter sense is

⁷¹ Robinson, *et al.* eds., *The Critical Edition of Q*, 530-531, omit Luke 19:14 from their Q-reconstruction. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 1232, argues, "Other commentators prefer to regard the additional verses as Lucan redaction, added to explain the delay in the appearance of the kingdom, which appears in vs. 11 and has been composed by Luke himself . . . The parable about vigilance and responsible human cooperation with God-given blessings has clearly taken on other nuances born of another time and place than stage I of the gospel tradition." On the other hand, Craig Blomberg, "When Is a Parallel Really a Parallel? A Test Case: The Lucan Parables," *WTJ* 46 (1984), 94, writes, "The position that sees a separate 'throne claimant' parable in Luke is deceptively attractive."

⁷² Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 537. Blomberg, "When Is a Parallel Really a Parallel?," 94, disagrees.

⁷³ Denaux, "The Parable of the King-Judge," 37.

⁷⁴ Jan Lambrecht, *Out of the Treasure, the Parables of the Gospel of Matthew* (Louvain: Peeter's Press, 1991), 222-223, writes, "What convinces us that the simpler structure of Matthew's parable must also be the more original is not only the double activity narrated in the Lukan version and the fact that the elements relating to the claimant to the throne can be removed from the latter without difficulty, but the observation that the discrepancies discoverable in the Lukan text are caused by the presence of just those elements."

unmistakable.”⁷⁵ If the allegorizing throne-claimant images were part of an original source, it is very unlikely that Matthew would have omitted them since they fit perfectly with his allegory.⁷⁶

A final piece of evidence that the throne-claimant images are secondary is the fact that they foreshadow the Jerusalem Entry narrative of 19:28-40.⁷⁷ In the Jerusalem Entry narrative the crowds proclaim Jesus king (19:38) but some Pharisees reject him (v. 39), resulting in a prophetic oracle concerning the eventual destruction of the city for its stubbornness (vv. 41-44). In order to draw a connection between the Jerusalem Entry and the throne-claimant images, Luke introduces (19:11) and concludes (19:28) the parable of the Minas with references to Jerusalem.⁷⁸ By inserting the throne-claimant images in the midst of these references to Jerusalem, Luke means for his audience to view Jesus as a kind of “nobleman” or “crown-prince” who will “go away on a journey” (i.e., πορεύομαι as Jesus’ death, resurrection, and ascension) in which he will be rejected by his subjects.⁷⁹ These particular events foreshadowed in the throne-claimant images will start taking place in the Passion narrative beginning with the Jerusalem Entry in 19:28.⁸⁰ However, the final events prefigured in the throne-claimant parable,

⁷⁵ Weinert, “Parable of the Throne Claimant,” 505.

⁷⁶ Denaux, “The Parable of the King-Judge,” 39-40. Blomberg, “When Is a Parallel Really a Parallel?,” 95, uses the absence of the throne-claimant motif in Matthew as evidence that Matthew and Luke are really depending on two separate sources, “Neither Luke’s addition nor Matthew’s omission of the throne claimant parable is likely since . . . it is Matthew and not Luke who prefers parables about kings and judgment. Finally, Luke does not elsewhere conflate parables, especially with this intricacy.”

⁷⁷ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel according to Luke*, 1228, claims, “The Lukan form of this parable, with its reference to kingship, prepares for Jesus’ own regal entry into Jerusalem in the episode that follows upon it (19:28-40).”

⁷⁸ Denaux, “The Parable of the King-Judge,” 44.

⁷⁹ Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 527, notes, “Several features of Luke’s narrative of the last days in Jerusalem connect to features of the parable: in the accounts of the triumphal entry Luke alone has Jesus acclaimed as ‘king’ (19:38), the rebellious citizens and their destruction in the parable are mirrored in the lament over Jerusalem (19:41-44), and the attitude of the rebellious citizens is mirrored in that of the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the leaders of the people (19:47).”

⁸⁰ Brent Kinman, “Parousia, Jesus’ ‘A-Triumphal’ Entry, and the Fate of Jerusalem,” *JBL* 118.2 (1999), 286.

especially the return of the newly-minted king (19:15) and punishment of the rebellious subjects (19:27), are fulfilled by the historical destruction of Jerusalem and the *Parousia*.⁸¹ In summary, Luke has woven the throne-claimant images into the parable of the Minas, the final unit of the Travel Narrative (9:51-19:27), as a foreshadowing of the Jerusalem Entry and the Passion.⁸²

The difference between the slaves' rewards and punishments is the final significant dissimilarity between Matthew and Luke's versions of the parable that we will analyze. In Matthew's parable, the master tells the first two slaves who doubled their talents, "Come, share in your master's happiness" (25:21, 23: εἴσελθε εἰς τὴν χαρὰν τοῦ κυρίου σου). On the other hand, he commands that the "worthless" third servant be thrown outside in the darkness, "where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (25:30: ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων). A brief look at Luke and Matthew will reveal that the one punishment that they both share is the removal of the money entrusted to the third servant and the bestowal of it on the first.⁸³ This punishment probably represents what Matthew and Luke found in Q since it fits well with the point of the nearly identical logion found in Matt 25:29//Luke 19:26.⁸⁴ In contrast, Matthew's addition of the reward of "entering into the master's happiness" is a reference to the

⁸¹ The prophecies of 19:41-44 and 21:20 suggest that for Luke Jerusalem's destruction was a past event with which the early Christian community was grappling. One response, illustrated by Luke, was to see it as judgment for the stubbornness of Jesus' "fellow citizens." See Wolter, "Israel's Future and the Delay of the Parousia," 309. Brent Kinman, "Parousia," 289-290, notes that according to the Gospel of Luke, the rejection of Jesus during his entry into Jerusalem by some Pharisees and the resulting prophecy in 19:41-44 becomes the reason why Jerusalem suffers destruction, "But rather than connecting God's judgment to events on the *day* of his entry, perhaps the pronouncement of judgment on the city is in response to repeated rejections of Jesus by the nation, of which the Pharisees' comment at the entry (Luke 19:39-40) is but the culmination."

⁸² Hultgren, *Parables*, 284-285.

⁸³ Robinson, *et al.* eds., *The Critical Edition of Q*, 550-551, see the third slave's punishment in Matt 25:28 and Luke 19:24 to be a more or less direct carryover from Q. Q, however, used the term *mina* instead of *talent* according to Robinson, *et al.*

⁸⁴ Beasley-Murray writes, "Matthew and Luke combine in reporting an identical saying in Matthew 25:29//Luke 19:26. It is also found in Mark 4:25//Matthew 13:12//Luke 8:18, and is obviously a *Wanderwort*. Presumably it was added here at an early stage in the common tradition, and it is likely that the parable in its earliest stage came to a close with Matthew's verse 28 (=Luke's v. 24)." Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 216. See also Hultgren, *Parables*, 287.

consummation of the Kingdom,⁸⁵ which, in the metaphorical sphere of our parable (and especially its connection with 25:31-46), is the Final Judgement at the *Parousia*.⁸⁶

Little needs to be said about the origin of the third slave's second punishment in Matthew 25:30. "Weeping and gnashing of teeth" is a phrase we have encountered several times already in the context of the Matthean eschatological allegories we have studied.⁸⁷ Not surprisingly, the phrase refers to the Final Judgment and is a Matthean insertion.⁸⁸ Blomberg writes, "The concluding refrain breaks the bounds of the parable's imagery by describing a place of eternal punishment where darkness and weeping and gnashing of teeth prevail (Mt 25:30)."⁸⁹ In summary, both the reward of "entering into the master's happiness" and the punishment of being cast into the place of "weeping and gnashing of teeth" are allegorizing Matthean redactional additions to the Q-parable.⁹⁰

We have noted a number of significant redactional differences between the two versions of the parable of Talents/Minas. Some of the most significant appear in the parable of the Minas including the narrative introduction of Luke 19:11 and the throne-claimant images of 19:12, 14-15b, and 27. The two most important redactional differences found in the Matthean parable are the burial of the talent in 25:18, 25 (versus Luke's hiding in a napkin in 19:20) and the master's

⁸⁵ In Matt, *χαρά* generally refers to the human response of joy upon discovering or receiving the eschatological kingdom of God (e.g., 2:10; 28:8; see esp. 13:20, 44; 25:21, 23). Hans Conzelmann, "χαίρω, χαρά, κτλ." *TDNT* 9.368-370, also notices strong eschatological overtones in the NT use of *χαρά* and its cognates.

⁸⁶ With regard to 25:21, 23, Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 735, writes, "For Christian readers (both in the first century and in the present), however, the language cannot fail to connote the joy of eschatological blessing." See also McGaughey, "The Fear of Yahweh," 237; Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1537; Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew XIX-XXVIII*, 402; and Jeremias, *Parables*, 60.

⁸⁷ See Matt 13:42 (the parable of the Weeds and the Wheat) and 22:13 (the Parable of the Wedding Feast). Other occurrences are Matt 8:12, 13:50, and 24:51.

⁸⁸ Harrington, "Polemical Parables in Matthew 24-25," 297.

⁸⁹ Blomberg, *Parables*, 217.

⁹⁰ Robinson, *et al.* eds., *The Critical Edition of Q*, 556, classifies Matt 25:30 as an insertion not present in Q.

long absence in 25:19 (versus the Lukan master's journey to a distant country in 19:12). It is not surprising that so many commentators posit that the Matthean and Lukan versions of the parable have no relationship at all.⁹¹ While not denying the numerous and significant differences between Matthew and Luke, there is much shared between the two versions, especially after the removal of the Lukan introductory verse and throne-claimant parable.

B. Evidence that the Versions of the Parable of the Talents/Minas Share a Common Source

Despite the differences between the two versions of the parable of the Talents/Minas, the numerous conceptual and verbal similarities must be explained.⁹² If we reject the proposition that Matthew and Luke's versions represent a similar parable told by Jesus on two separate occasions and transmitted by two separate traditions and/or sources,⁹³ then there remain two likely explanations for similarities in Luke and Matthew: (a) the two versions of the parable of the Talents/Minas represent the same story recorded and developed in different though related traditions (M and L); or (b) Matthew and Luke substantially redacted a common source (Q) to fit their literary and theological purposes. C. H. Dodd supports the former view (a):

The parable of the Talents in Matthew (xxv. 14-30) and the parable of the Pounds in Luke (xix. 12-27) are clearly variant versions of the same parable. The extent indeed to which they use the same words is not sufficient to make it certain that both evangelists followed the same proximate source; and there are differences in the actual story which make it probable that in both cases the pericope had a history in tradition before it reached the evangelists. Nevertheless it is in substance the same story.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Manson, *Sayings*, 313; Blomberg, *Parables*, 219-220; Blomberg, "When is a Parallel Really a Parallel," 91-96; Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 525, 530, 531; Hultgren, *Parables*, 273; and Scott, *Hear then a Parable*, 223.

⁹² The conceptual similarities and exact verbal parallels between the two accounts are more numerous in the second half of the parable which narrates the episode of the master's reckoning in Matt 25:19 ff. and Luke 18:15 ff.

⁹³ Below we will demonstrate that after the removal of the Lukan introduction (19:11) and the throne-claimant parable, Luke substantially resembles Matt. Furthermore, the remaining differences can be accounted for by appealing to the evangelists' unique literary and theological foci.

⁹⁴ Dodd, *Parables of the Kingdom*, 146. See also Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 733 and Manson, *Sayings*, 313.

According to Dodd, the major differences in the two versions arise from the separate development of the same parable in two traditions (M and L). This position is open to the same criticism as the supposition that Matthew and Luke's parables originate from a similar parable spoken by Jesus on two separate occasions (see below discussion).

The latter position (b) argues that in fact both Matthew and Luke possessed a common source (Q) which would account for the many similarities in the latter half of the two versions of the parable (see figure four below).⁹⁵ Brad Young offers a summary of the latter position,

The similarities in wording between Luke and Matthew are striking. Equally remarkable are the distinctive characteristics of the parable of the Talents and its secondary parallel in Luke's parable of the Pounds. Are the differences the result of Jesus telling two similar but distinctive stories on different occasions? . . . The strong verbal identity between them, however, makes another approach more plausible. Matthew and Luke seem to be related through common literary sources. In the present case, Luke's version was revised for its literary context according to its subsequent Christian interpretation.⁹⁶

According to this position, differences between the two versions arise from editorial changes made to Q by Matthew and Luke to support their unique literary and theological foci. Figure four below summarizes this evidence for a common source. An analysis of the evidence presented in figure four will be the task of the rest of this section.

Figure Four: Similarities between the Parables of the Talents and Minas			
v	The Parable of the Talents (Matt 25)	v	The Parable of the Minas (Luke 19)
14	A man (ἄνθρωπος) calls (ἐκάλεσεν) his slaves	12-	A well-born man (ἄνθρωπός) calls (καλέσας) his

⁹⁵ Denaux, "The Parable of the Talents/Pounds," 429-460, has made the most exhaustive and compelling argument for the existence of the parable of the Talents/Pounds in Q that I have encountered in my research.

⁹⁶ Young, *Parables*, 86. Denaux writes, "Another group of commentators, no less numerous, is of the opinion that both forms of the parable in Mt and Lk are dependent on the Q-source, or are at least dependent on different recensions of Q. Earlier authors sometimes referred to Q and M or L. Elsewhere, we have argued that the Q-hypothesis still offers the most plausible explanation of the data, even if the verbal agreements are rather limited." Denaux, "The Parable of the King-Judge," 39. See also, Marshall, *Luke*, 701-702.

	(δοῦλους) and gives (παρέδωκεν) them talents	13	slaves (δοῦλους) and gives (ἔδωκεν) them minas
19	He leaves a long time	12	He goes to a far country
19	He returns	15	He returns
19	The master, now called “Lord (ὁ κύριος),” requires an accounting	15	The master, now called “Lord (ὁ κύριος),” requires an accounting
20-21	The five-talent-slave, called good (δοῦλε ἀγαθέ), is judged faithful (πιστός) with a little	16-17	The first slave, called good (ἀγαθὲ δοῦλε), is judged faithful (πιστός) with a little
22-23	The two-talent-slave, called good (δοῦλε ἀγαθέ), is judged faithful (πιστός) with a little	18-19	The master receives a report and rewards the second
24-25	The master (ὁ κύριος) receives a report from the one-talent-slave who says [direct discourse] I knew you are a hard (σκληρός) man (ἄνθρωπος), reaping (θερίζων) where you do not sow (οὐκ ἔσπειρας) And I was afraid (φοβηθεῖς) so I hid your talent in the ground	20-21	The master (ὁ κύριος) receives a report from the other slave who says [direct discourse] I put it away in a piece of cloth because I feared (ἐφοβούμην) you since you are a hard (αὐστηρός) man (ἄνθρωπος), reaping (θερίζεις) where you do not sow (οὐκ ἔσπειρας)
26	The master responds [direct discourse] Wicked slave (πονηρὲ δοῦλε), you knew (ᾔδεις) that I reap (θερίζω) where I have not sown (ἔσπειρα)	22	The master responds [direct discourse] Wicked slave (πονηρὲ δοῦλε), you knew (ᾔδεις) that I am a hard (αὐστηρός) man, reaping (θερίζων) that which I have not sown (οὐκ ἔσπειρα)
27	You should have deposited (βαλεῖν) my money (τὰ ἀργύριά μου) to the bankers (τραπεζῖταις) and I when I came (ἐλθὼν) I would have it back with interest (σὺν τόκῳ)	23	Why didn’t you give (ἔδωκάς) my money (μου τὸ ἀργύριον) to the bank (τράπεζαν) and when I came (ἐλθὼν) I would have received in back with interest (σὺν τόκῳ) [direct discourse ends]
28	Therefore take from him (ἄρατε ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ) his talent and give (δότε) [it] to the one having (ἔχοντι) ten (δέκα) talents	24	He said to the others standing by [direct discourse] Take from him (ἄρατε ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ) his mina and give (δότε) [it] to the one having (ἔχοντι) ten (δέκα) minas [direct discourse ends]
29	For to one who has (τῷ ἔχοντι), more will be given (παντὶ δοθήσεται) and he will abound; but the one who does not have (τοῦ μὴ ἔχοντος), even what he has (καὶ ὃ ἔχει) will be taken (ἀρθήσεται) from him	26	Surely I tell you, More (παντί) to the one who has (τῷ ἔχοντι) will be given (δοθήσεται); but from the one who does not have (τοῦ μὴ ἔχοντος) even what he has will be taken (ὃ ἔχει ἀρθήσεται)

In weighing the two options above regarding the origin of the two versions of the parable, the evidence is in favor of a common source (Q) which Matthew and Luke have substantially redacted.⁹⁷ The confirmation of this proposition is that after the removal of three portions of text, Luke’s narrative introduction (19:11), Luke’s throne-claimant imagery (19:12, 14-15a, 27) and Matthew’s allegorizing rewards and punishments (25:21, 23, 30), the parable that emerges shares

⁹⁷ Denaux, “The Parable of the Talents/Pounds,” 430-431.

striking similarities in both versions.⁹⁸ We have already shown that each of these three portions of text show strong redactional affinities to their respective authors. After the removal of these three portions, “there is nothing that counts strongly against the main parable being available to Matthew and Luke in essentially the same form.”⁹⁹

The existence of a common source also accounts for puzzling details in the two versions of the parable of the Talents/Minas. First, it explains the presence of the nearly identical saying in Matt 25:29//Luke 19:26.¹⁰⁰ Though the saying is found in other places in the Synoptics and *Gos. Thom.*,¹⁰¹ it was integrated into the Q-version of the Talents/Minas parable at an early point and thus appears in a similar form in both Matthew and Luke.¹⁰² Another detail that a common source would explain is Luke’s miscounting of minas. We have already noted above that Luke’s first slave does not, in fact, have ten minas as the master and the onlookers assert in 19:24-25; rather, he has eleven since according to v. 16 he gained ten more (δέκα προσηργάσατο μνᾶς) *in addition* to his first. This counting error is presumably why some manuscripts omit v. 25.¹⁰³ However, from the perspective of our hypothesis, Luke’s counting error is an artifact of Q in which the first slave had *ten* just as in Matthew.¹⁰⁴ Yet another detail a common source would illuminate is the fact that only three of Luke’s ten slaves (19:13) are included in the master’s

⁹⁸ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 1231, writes, “It is better to think that the bulk of the parable in Luke stood in ‘Q’ in a form similar to Matthew, but with a few differences.” See also Young, *Jesus and His Jewish Parables*, 164-165.

⁹⁹ Nolland, *Luke 18:35-24:53*, 911.

¹⁰⁰ Robinson, *et al.* eds., *The Critical Edition of Q*, 554-555, have the logion from Matt 25:29 and Luke 19:26 in their reconstruction of Q.

¹⁰¹ See Mark 4:25//Matt 13:12//Luke 8:18; cf. *Gos. Thom.* 41

¹⁰² Scott, *Hear then a Parable*, 224.

¹⁰³ Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 527. According to NA²⁷, the verse is omitted by the uncials D and W, 69, and some Latin, Syriac, and Bohairic versions.

¹⁰⁴ Nolland, *Luke 18:35-24:53*, 916, states, “The man would actually have eleven minas already, having gained ten additional minas from his business efforts; the ‘ten’ here is likely to be a leftover from the ‘ten’ of the source, which contained Matthean numbers.”

accounting. Luke's redactional throne-claimant images require a larger number of slaves to conform with the master's status as a crown-prince.¹⁰⁵ However, the fact that only three out of ten slaves report to the master shows that, as in Matthew's Talents parable, three servants are present in Q.¹⁰⁶ Thus, the hypothesis of a common source explains not only similarities between the accounts, but also some significant differences between the two versions of the parable of the Minas/Talents.

Based on figure four above, we can deduce the following narrative framework of Q:¹⁰⁷ (1) a master goes on a journey, entrusting three slaves with his capital; (2) when he returns, he calls his slaves to account; (3) the first slave informs the master that he has increased the capital, earning an accolade, "Well done, good servant"; (4) the second servant does the same; (4) the third servant, who has hidden his capital instead of using it, excuses himself based on his fear of the master's rapaciousness (i.e., he is a "hard man" who "reaps where he does not sow"); (5) the master judges the third slave based on his own evaluation of the master's character; (6) the capital is taken from the third slave and given to the first; (7) the parable concludes with a logion substantially resembling Matt 25:29//Luke 19:26.¹⁰⁸ We will employ our preceding observations and this shared narrative framework from Q to shed light on several redactional additions to the parable of the Talents/Minas which connect the delay of the *Parousia* and the possibility of Gentile inclusion.

C. Delay and Gentile Inclusion in the Matthean and Lukan Redactions of the Parable

¹⁰⁵ Scott, *Hear Then a Parable*, 221-222.

¹⁰⁶ Scott, *Hear Then a Parable*, 226.

¹⁰⁷ See Denaux, "The Parable of the King-Judge," 37.

¹⁰⁸ Robinson, *et al.* eds., *The Critical Edition of Q*, 525-557, offer a similar reconstruction of the parable of the Talents/Minas in Q. See also the Q-reconstruction which substantially agrees with ours in Denaux, "The Parable of the Talents/Minas," 460.

Based on our analysis above, we can identify four unique Matthean and Lukan additions to the source parable of the Talents/Minas that appeal to the motifs of the delay of the *Parousia* and/or the possibility of Gentile inclusion. First, the throne-claimant motif of Luke 19:12, 14-15, 27 advocates for the possibility of Gentile inclusion. Second, the image of the master's long journey in Matt 25:19 and Luke 19:12 imply the delay of the *Parousia*. Third, the third slave's burial of his talent in Matt 25:18, 25 refers to the possibility of Gentile inclusion. Finally, the horrible punishment of the third servant in Matt 25:30 implies the possibility of Gentile inclusion.

We will discuss these four Matthean and Lukan additions to the Talents/Minas parable under the section below entitled, "*Challenges of Interpretation*." However, before this discussion, we need to lay further groundwork for our argument by briefly touching on the context and organization of our parable in its versions.

III. The Context of the Parable of the Talents/Minas in Matthew and Luke

Although we made some general comments about the context of Matthew and Luke's versions of the parable of the Talents/Minas in our above discussion of redaction, it is necessary to reflect on the role of the *Parousia's* delay and Gentile inclusion in the broader narrative context of both Gospels. The context of Luke's parable of the Minas shows an affinity to the negative pole of Gentile inclusion due to the Jerusalem Entry narrative (19:28-44) where Jesus experiences the Pharisees' rejection of his messianic identity.¹⁰⁹ While the theme of the

¹⁰⁹ The fact that the Pharisees want Jesus to rebuke his disciples (Luke 19:36) for their messianic exclamations of joy at Jesus' entry into Jerusalem indicate that the Pharisees have rejected Jesus' claim to be the Christ of prophecy. Brent Kinman, "Parousia, Jesus' 'A-Triumphal' Entry," 291, writes, "The Pharisees' remarks indicate, at the least, a lack of discernment regarding Jesus and, perhaps, downright hostility. Furthermore, for Luke their comments might be related to the preceding parable of the nobleman (Luke 19:11-27). In the parable, the enemies of the nobleman refuse to give allegiance to him: 'his citizens hated him . . . and said, We do not want this man to reign over us' (19:14). If the Pharisees' response to Jesus is prefigured in the parable, then Luke's Jesus has

Parousia's delay is not as evident in the Lukan context, it is present in the relationship of 19:11 to the surrounding pericopae and the many references to the delay in the Lukan Travel Narrative.

The parable of the Minas is the final element in the Travel Narrative,¹¹⁰ the longest portion (9:51-19:27) of Luke's Gospel which is sometimes also called the "Central Section."¹¹¹ Using a Hebraism, Luke reported in 9:51 that the time had come for Jesus to "set his face" (αὐτὸς τὸ πρόσωπον ἐστήρισεν) toward Jerusalem and depart for the city in order "to fulfill the day of his ascension" (ἐν τῷ συμπληροῦσθαι τὰς ἡμέρας τῆς ἀναλήμψεως αὐτοῦ).¹¹² Ten chapters later, at the conclusion of the parable of the Minas, Jesus has finally fulfilled his intention in 9:51 by arriving at the Mount of Olives (19:28), located on the immediate outskirts of the city of Jerusalem, where he will make the final preparations for his messianic entrance into the Holy City on a donkey's colt (cf. Zechariah 9:9).

These messianic overtones of the Jerusalem Entry narrative (19:28-44) to a large extent drive the kingship images of the throne-claimant.¹¹³ Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem as the King-Messiah is celebrated by some (19:37-38), but rejected and ignored¹¹⁴ by those among the Jerusalem establishment who should have acknowledged his messianic identity (19:39-44).¹¹⁵

anticipated Jerusalem's rejection in the parable he tells just before coming to the city. This is consistent with anticipations of rejection we find elsewhere in Luke (e.g., 9:22; 18:31-33)."

¹¹⁰ See Kistemaker, "The Structure of Luke's Gospel," 33-39.

¹¹¹ See Drury, *Tradition and Design in Luke's Gospel*, 183.

¹¹² William Arndt, *et al.*, eds., "στηρίζω," BAGD 768.

¹¹³ Denaux, "The Parable of the King-Judge," 44.

¹¹⁴ Regarding Jesus' reception in Jerusalem, Kinman, "Parousia, Jesus' 'A-Triumphal' Entry," 293-294, writes, "Jerusalem's hardened spiritual condition is epitomized by its failure to recognize its king. He is not met by city officials, nor feted by the leading citizens, nor escorted back to the city. The encounter with the Pharisees is a rejection, and the nonappearance of high priests, other officials, and the citizens of Jerusalem is an affront. This rejection is made even clearer by the fact that Luke has gone to some lengths to stress that Jesus is king. Although he is the king, he is not received as one by Jerusalem."

¹¹⁵ Nolland, *Luke 18:35-24:53*, 927-928, notes, "The present episode needs to be read closely with 19:11-28: Luke has gone to some pains to present them in parallel."

Similarly, the throne-claimant of Luke's Minas parable was opposed by a delegation of his own citizens (οἱ πολῖται αὐτοῦ) who were resisting his claim to messianic kingship over them (19:14). Luke's audience would have understood the rejection of the fellow citizens in the Minas parable and the Pharisees in the Jerusalem Entrance narrative (19:39) as emblematic of the rejection of Jesus as messianic king by many in Israel.¹¹⁶ In the context of Luke's Minas parable, the negative pole of Gentile inclusion appears--the exclusion of many in Israel because of their recalcitrance toward Jesus and his message.¹¹⁷ In this sense, the Jerusalem Entry evidences a redefinition of the concept of Israel in which the controlling principle is no longer belonging to the Jewish race, but rather the manner of one's reception of the message of Jesus.¹¹⁸ The first two slaves of the Minas parable and the disciples shouting Jesus' praises in the Entrance narrative (19:37-38) are members of the true Israel while the third slave and the disgruntled Pharisees (19:39) exclude themselves.

In addition to the negative pole of Gentile inclusion, the Jerusalem Entrance narrative also makes a link to the delay of the *Parousia* by means of Luke's introduction to the Minas parable in 19:11. Luke acknowledges that Jesus' location is the proximate cause of the parable of the Minas, "Because he [Jesus] was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God

¹¹⁶ Marshall, *Luke*, 705, argues, "The absent nobleman is thought of as having 'citizens,' i.e. the persons in the country over which he wishes to rule. They hated him (imperfect) and so sent (aorist) an embassy (14:32) after him to state that they did not want him to rule over them. A reference to Jewish rejection of Jesus as king (cf. Acts 17:7) would be seen by Luke's readers."

¹¹⁷ Klyne Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 527, notes the similarities between the parable of the Minas and the Entry narrative, "Several features of Luke's narrative of the last days in Jerusalem connect to features of the parable: in the accounts of the triumphal entry Luke alone has Jesus acclaimed as 'king' (19:38), the rebellious citizens and their destruction in the parable are mirrored in the lament over Jerusalem (19:41-44), and the attitude of the rebellious citizens is mirrored in that of the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the leaders of the people (19:47)." These similarities that Snodgrass provides describe the self-exclusion of many in Israel by virtue of their reception of Jesus and his message.

¹¹⁸ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel of Luke*, 1233, 1257. The Lukan Jesus' reasoning for the impending destruction of Jerusalem underscores this conclusion in 19:44, "You [Jerusalem] did not recognize the time of God's coming to you." Since many in Jerusalem did not receive Jesus and his message, Jerusalem will lose its identity as the center of YHWH's special presence in Israel.

was going to appear at once.”¹¹⁹ Doubtless, eschatological expectation must have been running high among Jesus’ disciples as he approached the Holy City where many assumed God would achieve the final deliverance of Israel.¹²⁰ For this reason, a few scholars and commentators have recently proposed that 19:11 *only* refers to the Jerusalem Entry and *not* to the *Parousia*.¹²¹ Snodgrass writes,

The intent of 19:11 is to *refute* ideas that the kingdom would appear when Jesus got to Jerusalem. At the same time, the relation of the parable to its context is striking, for while the parable fends off any idea the kingdom is to appear immediately, the narrative shows that Jesus appears as king.¹²²

No doubt, 19:11 does refer to the expectation of Jesus’ disciples as he began to traverse those last miles between Jericho and Jerusalem. However, Luke was not writing to address the eschatological expectations of Jesus’ disciples, he was writing to address the eschatological expectations of his late first century Christian audience which was coming to grips with the delay of the hoped-for consummation as we see in texts like Luke 18:1-8 and Acts 1:6-7.¹²³ It is probable therefore that on the narrative level 19:11 does refer to Jesus’ disciples’ misplaced anticipation of the deliverance of Israel on the final leg of the Jerusalem journey (cf. Acts. 1:6). But it is likely that Luke *intended* 19:11 to refer to the eschatological hopes of his late first

¹¹⁹ Hultgren, *Parables*, 284, writes, “The disciples begin to wonder whether the ‘kingdom of God was to appear immediately’ (19:11), either before or when they arrive in Jerusalem . . . It appears here to hold in check the view that the kingdom is to appear imminently.”

¹²⁰ Brent Kinman, “Jesus’ Royal Entry into Jerusalem,” *BBR* 13.2 (2005), 249, writes, “Indeed, if we can rely on Luke’s Gospel, there is some evidence that Jesus himself was wary of the nationalistic overtones that seemed to be emerging. Luke claims to have investigated the Jesus story ‘carefully’ (Luke 1:3), and it might therefore be significant that at the Entry narrative he inserts two pericopes that have the effect of demonstrating Jesus’ caution about the eschatological and nationalistic hopes that seem to have been aroused as he journeyed to Jerusalem.”

¹²¹ Johnson, “The Lukan Kingship Parable,” 143, writes, “There is little in the parable itself which demands considering it an allegorical tale about the ascension-parousia. In particular, there is nothing in Luke’s version to indicate temporal delay.”

¹²² Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 538. See also Schultz, “Jesus as Archelaus, 120.

¹²³ Hans Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke* (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), 97.

century audience who, as Snodgrass admits, already “knew that the kingdom did not appear when Jesus entered Jerusalem.”¹²⁴ Marshall captures this point well, “Luke particularly has used the parable to warn his readers that the kingdom would not come immediately . . . for otherwise it is hard to see why he should stress a point which ought to have been obvious to his readers after Easter.”¹²⁵

In a sense, the final leg of Jesus’ journey into Jerusalem is one where the eschatological-nationalistic aspirations of Jesus’ disciples and the eschatological anticipation of Luke’s audience arrive at a confluence like two streams feeding a river from different sides. For Jesus’ disciples, Jerusalem was the locus of nationalistic and eschatological hopes for a renewed Israelite kingdom as it was the capital of the Davidic dynasty and the Davidic Messiah.¹²⁶ For Luke’s audience, however, the Jerusalem episode would conjure all the long-standing and unrequited hopes for the final vindication of the *Parousia* as well.¹²⁷ Luke manages expectations at the confluence of these two streams by placing the parable of the Minas as the last scene in the Travel Narrative in order to show that Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem was not the realization of the eschatological-nationalistic hopes of the first generation of Jesus’ followers nor the eschatological longing of Luke’s late-first century audience.¹²⁸

However, in order to make this point, Luke must portray Jesus as a King whose final possession of his kingdom will be delayed. During this time his subjects will be tested as were

¹²⁴ Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 537.

¹²⁵ Marshall, *Luke*, 702.

¹²⁶ For Luke’s focus on Jerusalem see 13:31-35; 19:41-45; and 21:60.

¹²⁷ Luke’s audience, living after the Roman sacking of Jerusalem and the destruction of its Temple, could only view the city as a symbol of God’s as-yet-unrequited eschatological deliverance.

¹²⁸ Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke*, 74.

the slaves in the Minas parable.¹²⁹ By connecting the throne-claimant images in the Minas parable and the Jerusalem Entry scene with its images of rejection (19:39-44), Luke makes clear many in Israel will fail that test and will not be part of the reconstituted people of God whose defining characteristic is positive reception of Jesus' message and not ethnicity.¹³⁰ This is the negative pole of Gentile inclusion in the context of Luke's Minas parable.

With regard to the context of the parable of the Talents in Matthew, both the themes of the *Parousia*'s delay and Gentile inclusion manifest themselves. The delay of the *Parousia* emerges primarily from the placement of the Talents as the third of three *Parousia* parables (24:45-25:30) in Matthew's Eschatological Discourse (chs. 24-25). The possibility of Gentile inclusion may be found in both of the preceding *Parousia* parables and in the Final Judgment scene of 25:31-46.

The parable of the Talents is the final member of a trio of *Parousia* parables including the parable of the Wise and Foolish Servant (24:45-51) and the Virgins (25:1-13). Matthew has linked the Talents parable to these preceding parables through the phrase, ὥστε γάρ ("for it is just like").¹³¹ This phrase forges a close link between the Virgins parable, whose goal is to encourage preparation for the delayed *Parousia*, and the Talents parable where the motif of delay appears again.¹³² The verbal link between these two parables (25:5, 19) is χρονίζω/χρόνος, a term

¹²⁹ Darrell Bock, *A Theology of Luke and Acts* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 402.

¹³⁰ Bock, *Theology*, 280, writes, "God gave the promise to Israel originally. That plan was designed especially for her to be a beneficiary and through her for divine benefits to be given to the world, as the promise to Abraham shows (Gen 12:3). In effect, Luke argues that a good Jew will embrace the Messiah whom God has sent and become a member of the new way . . . Luke also emphasizes that the church was not formed with the intent that Jesus' followers would become something distinct, but they were forced to become distinct when Jewish rejection set in."

¹³¹ Arndt, *et al.*, eds., "ὥστε γάρ," *BAGD* 899.

¹³² Jeremias, *Parables*, 60, notes, "Matthew, too, has interpreted our parable as a *Parousia*-parable . . . since he has placed it among the *Parousia*-parables . . . It must have been, as the *gar* of the introduction shows (25:14), intended to reinforce the exhortation to watchfulness in view of the unknown hour of the *Parousia* (25:13)."

used to denote the *Parousia*'s delay.¹³³ Because of this shared term and the absence of both the bridegroom (Virgins) and master (Talents), there is congruence in the message of the two parables. Effectively, both parables treat the issue of preparation for the later-than-expected *Parousia*.¹³⁴

It is important to note that ὥσπερ γάρ does not require that the connection be only with the Virgins parable, but also with the themes and emphases of ch. 24, especially the parable of the Wise and Foolish Servant (24:45-51).¹³⁵ This parable more closely resembles the Talents parable than any other pericope in Matthew's Gospel.¹³⁶ In the parable of the Wise and Foolish Servant Matthew provides a contrast between a wise and faithful (πιστός) slave (cf. 25:21, 23) who manages his absent master's household effectively and a wicked and foolish (κακός) slave (cf. 25:26) who, because of his confidence in his master's delay (χρονίζω, cf. 25:19), mismanages the household by getting drunk and beating his fellow slaves.¹³⁷ Interestingly, upon his return in 24:46-47, the master rewards the wise slave with stewardship of *all his property* (πᾶσιν τοῖς ὑπάρχουσιν) foreshadowing the departing master of the Talents parable who entrusted three slaves with his property (τὰ ὑπάρχοντα αὐτοῦ) in 25:14.¹³⁸ There is also a parallelism between the punishment of the wicked slave (24:51) and the third slave (25:30) as they are both cast out into the place of weeping and gnashing of teeth (ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων). Due to all these conceptual and verbal similarities, it is to be expected that the parables of the Wise and Foolish Servant and the Talents effectively share the same message

¹³³ Gerhard Delling, "χρόνος," *TDNT* 9:592.

¹³⁴ Young, *Jesus and His Jewish Parables*, 166.

¹³⁵ Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 526.

¹³⁶ Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 735.

¹³⁷ Markus Locker, "Reading and Re-reading Matthew's Parable of the Talents in Context," in *BZ* 49.2 (2005), 163.

¹³⁸ Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew XIX-XXVIII*, 405.

concerning faithful, as opposed to foolish, use of the Master's resources before the longer-than-expected *Parousia*.¹³⁹

In the context of the three *Parousia* parables of Matt 24:45-25:30 and the Final Judgment scene of 25:31-46, there is evidence that Matthew addresses the negative pole of Gentile inclusion. In his commentary on Matthew¹⁴⁰ and his article, "Polemical Parables in Matthew 24-25,"¹⁴¹ Daniel J. Harrington develops the thesis that the three *Parousia* parables demonstrate a conflict over eschatology between the predominantly Jewish Matthean community and the nascent Jewish rabbinical movement that developed after the destruction of the Second Temple when many Jewish religious groups were attempting to reconstitute Judaism.¹⁴² In the beginning of his Eschatological Discourse, Matthew has hinted at controversy by claiming that Gentile inclusion would be part of the interim period before the *Parousia* along with persecutions and false teachings (24:14).¹⁴³ The parables referring to the unexpected arrival of the *Parousia*, including the simile of the Thief and the parables of the Wise and Foolish Servant and the Virgins perform two functions: they respond to Matthew's Jewish critics who have rejected his community's belief in the return of the Son of Man and they encourage the Matthean community to remain faithful.¹⁴⁴ Matthew's message is that despite the delay, the *Parousia* of the Son of Man will occur regardless of whether false teaching, which is itself an eschatological sign,

¹³⁹ Hultgren, *Parables*, 274.

¹⁴⁰ Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 341-360.

¹⁴¹ Harrington, "Polemical Parables," 287-298.

¹⁴² Harrington, "Polemical Parables," 288.

¹⁴³ Harrington writes with regard to the eschatological discourse, "Matthew has offered a message of patience and hope by making the parousia of Jesus the goal of these 'sufferings' and by lengthening the timetable until the Gentile mission could be carried out in its fullness. He also helped Christians deal with problems within their own community (defections, delations, hatreds, false prophets, *anomia*) by placing them within the outline of things that must happen." Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 335.

¹⁴⁴ Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 346, 350.

claims otherwise.¹⁴⁵ In the context of the Eschatological Discourse and the three *Parousia* parables, there is evidence of criticism and condemnation of Matthew's Jewish opponents.

Another indication of the possibility of Gentile inclusion in the context of the parable of the Talents is Matthew's portrait of the Final Judgment in 25:31-46. In this scene, taking place after the *Parousia*, all the nations (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη)¹⁴⁶ are gathered before the exalted Son of Man and his angels (25:32-33). What is novel about the scene is that many Gentiles are vindicated in this Judgment, which is based on their treatment of the "least of these brothers of mine" (ἐνὶ τούτων τῶν ἀδελφῶν μου τῶν ἐλαχίστων) or the Christian fellowship.¹⁴⁷ The idea that the old distinction between ethnic Israel and the Gentiles would disappear in the Final Judgment was certainly counterintuitive for many.¹⁴⁸ In Matthew's scene of the Final Judgment following the parable of the Talents, he shows that Gentiles will indeed be included in the people of God in the eschaton.

According to Harrington's plausible analysis of the three *Parousia* parables of chs. 24-25, Matthew builds a case that some of his community's Jewish critics could be removed from the people of God at the *Parousia* and ensuing judgment because their rejection of Jesus' message. This concept is parallel with the negative pole of Gentile inclusion where the people of God are redefined not by birth, but rather by their reception of the early Christian community's message. However, even if we reject Harrington's argument, an indisputable reference to Gentile inclusion nevertheless appears in the Final Judgment scene (Matt 25:31-46) immediately following the parable of the Talents.

¹⁴⁵ Harrington, "Polemical Parables," 287.

¹⁴⁶ It is likely that Matt has in mind the normal sense of πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, or the Gentile nations, in this phrase. Harrington, *Matthew*, 358. But even if Gentiles are not exclusively meant here, they must be included (along with Jews) in πάντα τὰ ἔθνη. See Wilson, *The Gentiles*, 5.

¹⁴⁷ Jeremias, *Jesus' Promise*, 47.

¹⁴⁸ Jeremias, *Jesus' Promise*, 49.

IV. The Organization of the Parable of the Talents and Minas in Matthew and Luke

The organization of the parable of the Talents/Minas is relatively straightforward in the Matthean version. However, the addition of the throne-claimant images to the plot of the original parable makes the structure somewhat harder to discern in Luke.

Most commentators and scholars recognize Matthew's parable as the closest to Q and therefore the most simple and a better approximation to the oral tradition.¹⁴⁹ For this reason, the structure of the Matthean parable easily breaks down into three units.¹⁵⁰ In many of the absent master parables these three units are also present, though perhaps only embryonically: (1) the departure of the master, (2) the period of testing, and (3) the master's return and subsequent judgment. In the first scene of the Talents parable, the master entrusts his slaves with his property and departs (25:14-15).¹⁵¹ In this way, the first unit establishes the "absent master" motif, placing the parable in the context of *Parousia* expectation. The second unit, the account of the slaves' discharge of their duties, comprises vv. 16-18.¹⁵² These verses, which are entirely absent in the Lukan account, prepare the audience for the master's return and judgment of the slaves. The third and final section of the Matthean parable is the master's return and judgment of the slaves in vv. 19-30.¹⁵³ This longest portion of the parable displays the common source behind Matthew and Luke. Since the majority of this third section deals with the third slave's report and ensuing punishment (vv. 24-30), Matthew's parable is much more a warning than an

¹⁴⁹ Blomberg, *Parables*, 217.

¹⁵⁰ Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew XIX-XXVIII*, 401.

¹⁵¹ McGaughey, "The Fear of Yahweh," 241.

¹⁵² Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 523.

¹⁵³ McGaughey, "The Fear of Yahweh," 241.

encouragement.¹⁵⁴ Possibly in Q the master's judgment and punishment of the third slave required more explanation because it would have shocked the audience (see discussion below).¹⁵⁵ Overall, the organization of the Matthean parable is simple, straightforward, and fits well with structure established in other "absent master" parables.

Luke's parable of the Minas offers several complications with regard to structure because of its composite nature in which two separate though similar plots have been molded into a hybrid.¹⁵⁶ Two of the most difficult complications in discerning an overarching structure are where to place the introductory verse about Jerusalem (19:11) and the final verse which shifts the attention from the punishment of the third slave to the slaughter of the throne-claimant's adversaries (v. 27). Adelbert Denaux resolved this problem by incorporating 19:28 ("After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem") into the parable of the Minas, creating an inclusio framed by the reference to Jerusalem in the introduction (v. 11) and conclusion (v. 28).¹⁵⁷ According to this scheme, the body of the parable breaks down into two sections.¹⁵⁸

The first of these units describes the narrative setting of the parable in vv. 12-14 including the voyage of the throne claimant (v. 12) and the embassy of his adversaries (v. 14). The second main unit (vv. 15-27), describes the return of the master and the ensuing report and judgment of

¹⁵⁴ Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew XIX-XXVIII*, 401

¹⁵⁵ Scott, *Hear then A Parable*, 229-330, correctly claims that the audience would have identified with and had sympathy for the third slave since it was common among first century Jews to bury a treasure in order to protect it. In effect, it was the third slave who was acting honorably towards his master by assuring that he would receive back his property exactly as he had left it.

¹⁵⁶ Lambrecht, *Out of the Treasure*, 222-223.

¹⁵⁷ Denaux, "The Parable of the King-Judge," 45. While the majority of scholars and most English translations see v. 27 as the conclusion of the parable of the Minas, Martin Culy, Mikeal Parsons, and Joshua Stigall, *Luke: A Handbook on the Greek Text* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2010), 603, argue, "Given the presence of this conjunction [καί] and the lack of clear boundary markers until the next verse (καί ἐγένετο ὥς), verse 28 is best taken as the conclusion to this pericope [the Minas] rather than the start of the next one [the Entrance narrative]."

¹⁵⁸ Puig i Tàrrach, "La Parabole des Talents," 171, also argues for two scenes in the Lukan text, "Le texte lukanien s'articule en deux scènes doubles divisées par une locution adverbiale («Quand il revint »: v. 15)."

three of his slaves.¹⁵⁹ This portion is more or less parallel with Matt 25:19-30 and contains the “core” of the parable of the Minas. In the final verse (27) of the second unit, Luke abandons the plot of the Minas and instead returns to the throne-claimant image. In this way, Luke focuses the punishment not on the poor management of the third slave who merely had his mina taken away; but rather on the rebellious subjects whom the master will slaughter.

What lessons can be gleaned from the structure of these parables with respect to our themes of the *Parousia*’s delay and Gentile inclusion? One lesson is the prominence of the master’s long absence and return in the structure of both versions of the parable. In the two versions of the parable, the delay of the *Parousia* is represented by the master or king’s long absence (Matt: μετὰ πολὺν χρόνον in 25:19) and the journey to a far country (Luke: εἰς χώραν μακρὰν in 19:12). Similarly, the return of the master/king for a reckoning represents the *Parousia* in both versions.¹⁶⁰ Neither the master/king’s long absence/voyage nor his return are incidental narrative details. They are fundamental components of the *absent master* motif and, therefore, are essential to the structure and meaning of the parable of Talents/Minas.

A second lesson from the structure of the parable is the overwhelming focus on what we have called the negative pole of Gentile inclusion. Luke and Matthew give comparatively little attention in their respective structures to the reward of the first two slaves. Rather, both Luke and Matthew’s narratives linger over the excuses offered by and punishment inflicted on the third slave.¹⁶¹ The inference from this organizational strategy is that the parable’s focus is primarily negative. The third slave’s association vis-à-vis the master will not protect him from being

¹⁵⁹ Puig i Tàrrach, “La Parabole des Talents,” 171.

¹⁶⁰ Hultgren, *Parables*, 276, and Fitzmyer, *The Gospel of Luke*, 1231.

¹⁶¹ McGaughey, “The Fear of Yahweh,” 237.

excluded from the eschatological people of God at the *Parousia*.¹⁶² Rather, the reception and management of the master's trust will be the deciding factor in place of traditional associations such as birth or national identity.

V. Challenges of Interpretation in the Parable of the Talents/Minas

In our discussion of the relationship of the two versions of the parable of the Talents/Minas we identified four Matthean and Lukan additions to their original source that appeal to the motifs of the delay of the *Parousia* and/or the possibility of Gentile inclusion: (a) the throne-claimant motif of Luke 19:12, 14-15, 27; (b) the image of the master's long journey to a far country in Matt 25:19 and Luke 19:12; (c) the third slave's buried talent in Matt 25:18, 25; and (d) the horrible punishment of the third slave in Matt 25:30. Due to the allegorical nature of the parable, these four additions pose interpretational challenges and are critical to our argument about the *Parousia*'s delay and Gentile inclusion.

A. The Throne-Claimant Motif and the Reconstitution of Israel

We claimed earlier that the throne-claimant images in the parable of the Minas are allegorizing details of Lukan origin and not part of the Q-parable. For this reason, the throne-claimant images are extremely important to our argument because they illustrate Luke's own literary goals and theological orientation. However, the throne-claimant images present a

¹⁶² In fact, the organization of the parable plays on the OT tension between the status of Israel as God's elect community and the exclusion it experiences from YHWH because of sin. Weinart notes, "In the general context of Jesus' preaching about the need for preparedness in the face of the imminent arrival of God's kingdom, a story that ends so ominously for one of the parties could well be understood as a warning. But the nature of this story as a warning comes out even more clearly against the background of OT texts dealing with similar matter. The clearest OT parallel which envisions a king's vengeance on rebels in such direct terms appears in Jer 39:5-7 and 52:9-11, 24-27 (cf. 2 Kgs 25:6-7, 18-21). These texts in Jeremiah bring out the full implications of Jeremiah's earlier warning to Zedekiah in 34:2-3 (cf. 32:3-5), and the consequences of ignoring such a prophetic warning. With the fall of Jerusalem, Zedekiah is captured and summoned before Nebuchadnezzar for judgment at his headquarters; there Zedekiah's sons and the prominent leaders of Judah are executed in his presence, and Zedekiah is blinded and exiled in chains." Weinart, "The Throne-Claimant Reconsidered," 505.

challenge for interpretation. They are not only harsh, but don't seem to fit very well with the rest of the parable.¹⁶³

The throne-claimant images are images of *rejection* and therefore represent the negative pole of Gentile inclusion. In other words, the throne-claimant images illustrate the reconstitution of Israel, the people of God, not by factors of birth or ethnic identity, but by the reception of Jesus and his message. Hans Conzelmann notes that in Luke's theology the ethnic people of Israel have salvation-historical priority with the result that "the starting point of mission is always in the synagogue."¹⁶⁴ It is not our task to contribute to the ongoing debate about the historicity of Luke-Acts and offer a judgement as to whether this salvation priority was indeed observed in the early Christian communities. Nevertheless, according to Luke-Acts, the Israelite people do indeed receive salvation priority. However, if members of Israel reject the message of Jesus, they exclude themselves from reconstituted Israel according to Lukan theology.¹⁶⁵ By virtue of this rejection, there is an opportunity for those who were not part of Israel to join the reconstituted people of God.¹⁶⁶ Despite the negative reaction of many Israelites to the message of Jesus and the Christian community, according to Luke the reconstituted people of God always contain a remnant of those who are Israelite by birth. The negative pole, which is the rejection of Jesus' message by some in Israel resulting in their exclusion, and the positive pole, the reception of Jesus' message by Gentiles resulting in their incorporation into a reconstituted Israel, cannot be

¹⁶³ Young, *Parables*, 87.

¹⁶⁴ Conzelmann, *The Theology of Saint Luke*, 145. For example, the term "Israel" has a very positive meaning in the infancy narratives of Jesus where Israelite saints like Mary, Zechariah, Simeon, and Anna confess that the Christ-child is the salvation and consolation of Israel. However, the coming of the Messiah also results in the "falling and rising of many in Israel" (Luke 2:34). Bock, *A Theology of Luke*, 282, accurately observes, "So God's program is doing two things at once. It is dividing Israel as we know her, but it is also forming a new people made up of Israel and the nations."

¹⁶⁵ Conzelmann, *The Theology of Saint Luke*, 145.

¹⁶⁶ e.g., Acts 13:46: "We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles."

separated in Luke-Acts. Thus, we are justified to include the throne-claimant motif in our analysis of the theme of Gentile inclusion.

In order to grasp the significance of the throne-claimant images for the theme of Gentile inclusion, we must understand their origin and meaning. There is fairly broad agreement that the throne-claimant images refer to the historical events surrounding the accession of Archelaus, the designated heir of Herod the Great, to his ethnarchy.¹⁶⁷ In both *J.W.* (2.80-2.100) and *Ant.* (17.299-320), the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus narrates the well-known incident which occurred in 4 B.C. after death of Herod the Great.¹⁶⁸ At the time of his death, Herod had been embroiled in a dispute which his son Archelaus finally settled by the slaughter of 3000 Jews immediately after the time of mourning for his father had concluded and before the Emperor had ratified his kingship. In response, both Archelaus and a delegation of Palestinian Jews traveled to Rome to present before Caesar Augustus their grievances against each other.¹⁶⁹ The Jewish delegation, with support of many Roman Jews, argued for a Roman governor to be placed over Judea instead of Archelaus because of Herodian mistreatment in the preceding decades. Augustus ruled that Archelaus should receive one-half of Herod's kingdom as an ethnarchy and the rest be divided between his brothers, Philip and Antipas.¹⁷⁰ Though what happened to the Jewish delegation upon its return from the failed Roman embassy is not recorded, there is no reason to doubt that Archelaus brutally suppressed its members.¹⁷¹ The fact that Augustus

¹⁶⁷ Fitzmyer, *The Gospel of Luke*, 1234; Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1532; Jeremias, *Parables*, 59. Marshall, *Luke*, 701; Manson, *Sayings*, 313; etc.

¹⁶⁸ Jeremias, *Parables*, 59.

¹⁶⁹ Josephus, *J.W.*, 2.88-90.

¹⁷⁰ Josephus, *Ant.*, 17.317-320.

¹⁷¹ Marshall, *Luke*, 709.

deposed Archelaus by A.D. 6 for “tyranny and barbarity” against his own people supports this supposition.¹⁷²

Based on the similarities between the story of Archelaus’ succession and the throne-claimant images in Luke 19:11-27, there is reason to conclude that Luke is appealing to his readers’ memory of the story to make a point about the rejection of Jesus as King by some in Israel.¹⁷³ However, the story offends some moral sensibilities as it makes an implicit comparison between the murderous Herodian tyrant, Archelaus, and Jesus Christ.¹⁷⁴ Francis Weinart laments, “What sense could a Christian audience possibly make out of the image of a delegation sent after Jesus to prevent his heavenly enthronement? And if the nobleman in this story is simply an allegorical substitute for Jesus, how could a Christian audience reconcile the ruler’s vengeful treatment of his enemies with the teaching of Jesus on this matter?”¹⁷⁵ Unfortunately, Weinart fails to understand the parable’s point of comparison. The point of the comparison is not that Jesus is *like* Archelaus or that some Jews are sending an embassy against Jesus *as* they sent an embassy against Archelaus before Augustus. Rather, the point is *just as it was dangerous for the Jewish delegation to oppose Archelaus’ succession to his father’s throne, so also it is reckless for some*

¹⁷² Josephus, *Ant.*, 17.342. See also Schultz, “Jesus as Archelaus,” 109-110.

¹⁷³ See Young, *Jesus and his Jewish Parables*, 167-168, “Luke’s version of the parable seems to contain an inherent anti-Jewish polemic that would be quite far removed from Jesus. While Luke does not make a direct identification between these enemies and the Jewish people, it seems that such an interpretation could have arisen by later commentators of the revised parable.” Cf. Young, *Parables*, 86. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 537, writes, “Although some find it difficult to think Jesus would allude to Archelaus in a positive way, the parallels are so striking that it is difficult to think otherwise or to think hearers would not have thought of Archelaus. In effect the parable charges that *some Jews were resisting the reign of the Messiah as if he were Archelaus* [emphasis mine]. This is a good example of a parable being used as a weapon and gives Luke’s parable a different emphasis from Matthew’s, even though the second plot concerning faithfulness is still present.” Manson, *Sayings*, 314, notes, “The nobleman, who may originally have been Herod Archelaus, is here Jesus himself. The departure to a distant country corresponds to the pilgrimage of Archelaus to Rome. Here it stands for the death and exaltation to heaven of Jesus . . . The refusal of ‘his citizens’ applies to Archelaus, whose application to Augustus was actively opposed by his own subjects. It also fits the case of Jesus, who is rejected by the ‘sons of the Kingdom.’”

¹⁷⁴ Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 537.

¹⁷⁵ Weinart, “Parable of the Throne Claimant Reconsidered,” 507.

in Israel to oppose Jesus' messianic kingship as they will in the Jerusalem Entry narrative (19:28-44).¹⁷⁶

At this point a problem of interpretation presents itself. What is the connection between the throne-claimant images which warn against Jesus' rejection by some in Israel and the main story of the parable, which seemingly refers to the good management of property entrusted to slaves during their master's absence? Brad Young bemoans, "In the final analysis, the competing theme of the nobleman who travels to a far country to receive a kingdom (Luke 19:12) seems to work contrary to the major focus of the picture, which describes the master who rewards his servants for taking care of his deposit. The message of stewardship is essential for the parable, while the opposition to the coming king remains secondary."¹⁷⁷ Part of the problem is the natural result of Luke's attempt to fuse together two independent plots into one parable.¹⁷⁸ However, it stands to reason that Luke had a purpose for adding the throne-claimant images and it had something to do with the main point of the parable of the Minas.

Perhaps the main point of the parable is not, as Brad Young suggests, merely good stewardship. In the Lukan version of the parable the third slave does much more than just mismanage his trust. First, the third slave is negligent, merely setting aside (ἀπόκειμαι) the money in a piece of cloth where it could easily be recognized and stolen.¹⁷⁹ Matthew's third slave was much wiser and more responsible to bury his master's capital in the ground.¹⁸⁰ Secondly, as we see in another Lukan addition (19:13) the third slave is also disobedient since he

¹⁷⁶ Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 540.

¹⁷⁷ Young, *Parables*, 87. Schultz, "Jesus as Archelaus," 110, agrees, "As is immediately visible, this added teaching does not appear to contribute anything to the main themes of trust, faithfulness, and reward, which are so central to the parable of the master and his servants."

¹⁷⁸ Denaux, "The Parable of the King-Judge," 40.

¹⁷⁹ Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 216.

¹⁸⁰ Boucher, *The Parables*, 286.

was instructed to put the money to work.¹⁸¹ Finally, the third slave accuses his master, who has just bestowed ten cities on one servant (v.17) and five on another (v. 18), of being in effect an unscrupulous, greedy, and severe taskmaster (vv. 20-21). Interestingly, there is nothing else in the parable to suggest that the master had such a reputation.¹⁸² The third servant's behavior in the parable is negligent, disobedient, disrespectful, and ultimately, *rebellious*.

Perhaps the connection with the throne claimant/Archelaus episode and the rest of the parable is not so difficult to understand after all. In the Minas narrative the third servant, who judges his noble master to be a greedy, harsh, and rapacious prince, has neglected his property, disobeyed him, and finally insulted him to his face.¹⁸³ Similarly, in the throne claimant images, a prince's rebellious subjects send an embassy to oppose his accession to the throne by heaping accusations and insults on him.¹⁸⁴ The similarity present in both the throne-claimant images and in the actions of the third servant is rebellion against a sovereign, which, in monarchies both ancient and modern, is no minor offense. While there is an interim period of reprieve and opportunity for obedient work during the master's long journey, there will be a day of judgment for those who rebel against their sovereign.

Thus the negative pole of Gentile inclusion becomes apparent. Identity, citizenship, and birthright will not provide assurance of reward or safety from judgment when the Master (κύριος) returns from his long journey as the third servant and the rebellious citizens discovered.

¹⁸¹ Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 530.

¹⁸² Scott, *Hear then a Parable*, 232, writes, "Nothing in the narration indicates that the master was hard and ruthless with them [the other servants] or that they were in fear of him."

¹⁸³ Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 1542.

¹⁸⁴ In *Ant.*, 17.304-313, Josephus offers a very interesting account of the Jewish delegation's list of offenses committed by the Herodians against the nation: impoverishment, illegal seizing of property, unfair taxation, solicitation of bribes, offending the decency of daughters and wives (i.e., sexual harassment), insolent and inhumane treatment, and finally massacre.

Joachim Jeremais observes, “The mere fact of belonging to Israel constituted no protection against the judgment of God . . . In the final judgment the distinction between Israel and the Gentiles would disappear.”¹⁸⁵ The reconstituted Israel will be a people of God comprised of those who receive Jesus as King and put his message to work. Though nothing in the parable states it outright, the inference from the Lukan context is that anyone, regardless of race, may become subjects and servants of King Jesus on the basis of how they receive his message.¹⁸⁶ In this way Luke’s throne-claimant images display the theme of Gentile inclusion in the parable of the Minas.

B. The Master’s Long Journey and the Delay of the Parousia

A second challenge of interpretation in both versions of the parable of the Talents/Minas is the reference to the master’s *long* absence (Matt 25:19: μετὰ πολὺν χρόνον) or journey to a *distant* country (Luke 19:12: εἰς χώραν μακράν). For most commentators, these references should be interpreted allegorically in the following way. The master’s departure refers to the events of Good Friday/Easter and the Ascension.¹⁸⁷ The passage of a significant interim period between the departure and return of the master/king indicates the delayed *Parousia*.¹⁸⁸ Finally,

¹⁸⁵ Jeremias, *Jesus’ Promise*, 49. See, for example, Matt 25:31-46.

¹⁸⁶ Scott, *Hear then a Parable*, 222, takes a similar view, “The theme of one of noble birth’s claiming his throne fits nicely into the Lukan scheme. The notion of Jesus’ kingship is prominent in Luke, and the rejection of the Jews is also an important theme. The throne claimant advances Luke’s purpose by distinguishing salvation, which is here today, and the kingdom, which allegorically has a timetable of three parts: investiture by ascension, time between investiture and Parousia, and triumphant return at the Parousia. *The successful servants are those like the blind man and Zacheaus who in the interim bring forth fruits of repentance, while those who contest the king’s claim are those unfaithful Jews* [emphasis mine].”

¹⁸⁷ Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew XIX-XXVIII*, 402, write, “Whether or not one uses the word allegory, this parable, like the preceding, is filled with obvious symbols. The master is Jesus. His slaves represent the church, whose members have received various responsibilities. The master’s departure is the departure of the earthly Jesus. The long time of the master’s absence is the age of the church. His return is the *Parousia* of the Son of man.”

¹⁸⁸ McGaughy, “The Fear of Yahweh,” 237-238.

the return of the master for judgment represents the *Parousia* itself.¹⁸⁹ However, there are several scholars that reject the association of the *Parousia*'s delay with the journey to a distant country in Luke.¹⁹⁰ Since the reference to the long absence (Matt) and the distant country (Luke) are critical to the theme of the *Parousia*'s delay in the two versions, we will spend a little time reflecting on their meaning and significance.

As we mentioned, the meaning of Luke's reference to a distant country (εἰς χώραν μακράν) is disputed much more than Matthew's μετὰ δὲ πολλὸν χρόνον (after a long time). With regard to the Minas, the whole dispute hinges on the interpretation of Luke's introduction to the parable in 19:11. Scholars who see a simple foreshadowing of the upcoming Jerusalem Entry narrative in 19:11 see no allegorical significance to the "distant country" remark.¹⁹¹ However, for those who see 19:11 as Luke's effort to diminish his audience's hope for an imminent *Parousia*, the "distant country" is a reference to delay.¹⁹² Since we have already suggested in our section on the context of the two versions that 19:11 was indeed a foreshadowing of both the Jerusalem Entry narrative and a reference to the *Parousia*'s delay, we will not discuss this issue any further here.

The supposition that the reference to a distant country in 19:12 refers to the delay of the *Parousia* fits well into Lukan eschatology. Hans Conzelmann argues that disappointment with the delay of the *Parousia* is a fundamental theme in Lukan eschatology.¹⁹³ In view of this Lukan theological perspective, the reference to the distant country is "a summons to be ready for a long

¹⁸⁹ Fitzmeyer, *The Gospel According to Luke*, 1234.

¹⁹⁰ Denaux, "The Parable of the King-Judge," 47.

¹⁹¹ Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 537-538.

¹⁹² Marshall, *Luke*, 702.

¹⁹³ Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke*, 97, writes, "Luke's eschatology, compared with the original conception of the imminence of the Kingdom, is a secondary construction based on certain considerations which with the passage of time cannot be avoided. In is obvious what gives rise to these reflections—the delay of the *Parousia*. The original idea presupposes that what is hoped for is near, which means that the hope cannot be reconciled with delay, as otherwise the connection would be lost."

time of waiting. This answer is typical of Luke.”¹⁹⁴ In fact, this answer is typical of the Travel Narrative where Luke has made several references to his audience’s anxiety about the *Parousia*’s delay in 12:38,¹⁹⁵ 45; 14:15; and 18:7.¹⁹⁶ Since Luke’s Minas parable is indeed a christological allegory, a reference to the throne-claimant’s long journey cannot be incidental in light of Lukan theology.¹⁹⁷ On the whole, the evidence indicates that the master’s long journey is an appeal to the *Parousia*’s delay in Luke.¹⁹⁸

In the parable of the Talents, there is no dispute that the master’s long absence in Matt 25:19 refers to the delay of the *Parousia*. Davies and Allison conclude, “The nobleman’s absence stands for the post-Easter period: The Lord is gone but will come again.”¹⁹⁹ As we mentioned in the discussion of Matthew’s context above, the decisive factor for the meaning of the master’s long absence is the influence of the preceding two parables (24:45-51 and 25:1-13) which use the same root word (χρόνος) to refer to the *Parousia*’s delay.²⁰⁰ The parable of the Talents comports with Matthew’s other “absent master” parables²⁰¹ where the absence refers to the experience of

¹⁹⁴ Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke*, 113.

¹⁹⁵ The mention of the master’s coming “even in the second or third watch of the night” suggests delay because this places the *Parousia* near the end of the night. Dodd, *Parables*, 162.

¹⁹⁶ In addition to the references in the Travel Narrative, Luke also refers to the delay in his enigmatic reference to the fulfillment of the “times of the Gentiles” in 21:24 and the disciples’ question in Acts 1:6 and Jesus response in v. 7.

¹⁹⁷ Wolter, “Israel’s Future and the Delay of the Parousia,” 314.

¹⁹⁸ Hultgren, *Parables*, 288.

¹⁹⁹ Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew XIX-XXVIII*, 406.

²⁰⁰ Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, claims, “‘And after a long time,’ gives the servants sufficient time to work with the money but also reflects the delay of the parousia of the Son of Man, also the topic of 24:48; 25:5. Matthew’s readers, if they received the Gospel in the late sixties, could only have taken comfort from the acknowledgement of the length of time.”

²⁰¹ See parables of the Wise and Foolish Servant in Matt 24:45-51 and Virgins in Matt 25:1-13. The parable of the Tenants (21:33-46) does not refer to the *Parousia* even though it contains a reference to the master’s absence (21:33).

the early Christian community coming to grips with the ever-lengthening interim period between Easter and the *Parousia* despite its sincere hope that the period would be short.

C. The Buried Talent and Matthew's Criticism of His Opponents

A third interpretational challenge posed by the parable of the Talents/Minas is the burying of the talent in Matthew's version (25:15, 25). In the Lukan version, the third servant merely "lays up" his mina (19:20) in a piece of cloth, which indicates culpable negligence in light of the master's command to "put the money to work" (v. 13).²⁰² In the absence of a command to invest the talent, why would Matthew's third slave be criticized, punished, and ultimately delivered into eternal punishment for safely concealing his master's property underground?²⁰³ The Matthean redactional addition in v. 15, ἐκάστω κατὰ τὴν ἰδίαν δύναμιν ("to each according to his ability"), could indicate that Matthew's audience is to assume the master made a declaration resembling Luke 19:13.²⁰⁴ Nevertheless, the response of the master to his servant's concealment of talent in the ground seems inexplicably harsh.

The inexplicable harshness of judgment on the third servant is compounded by the fact that Jewish people of the first century commonly buried treasure as a means of preservation. Consider, for example, Matthew's own parable of Hidden Treasure: "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure *hidden in a field*. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field" (13:44). Josephus also records in several places how the inhabitants of Jerusalem concealed their wealth in the ground against the pillaging onslaught of

²⁰² Hultgren, *Parables*, 286.

²⁰³ Schultz, "Jesus as Archelaus," 125.

²⁰⁴ Scott, *Hear then a Parable*, 226, argues that both the reference to the servants' abilities (25:15) in Matt and the instructions of the master (19:13) are secondary insertions of the Gospel writers.

the Roman besiegers.²⁰⁵ Furthermore, there are numerous later rabbinic sources lauding the burial of treasure as a method of safekeeping.²⁰⁶ In fact, according to rabbinical tradition, anyone who buried a treasure immediately upon receiving it “was free from liability for its loss.”²⁰⁷ By burying a treasure held in trust, there could effectively be no basis for the owner to bring a charge of theft or impropriety against the steward. Since it was not only acceptable but even laudable to bury money held in trust,²⁰⁸ why then did Matthew’s third servant receive such harsh punishment?

The severe reaction of the master to the third servant occurs because the buried talent is not an incidental narrative detail, but an image chosen by Matthew as criticism of other late first century Jewish movements that rejected the message of the Christian community. Given that the background of Matthew’s Gospel is competition between the early Jewish-Christian movement and the emerging Jewish movements following the destruction of the Second Temple and its cult, Daniel Harrington argues,

But in view of Matthew's own setting, why could not the situation within Judaism (but after 70 C.E.) have been the background for the Matthean version of the parable also? . . . The early rabbinic movement, in the collection of the wisdom of

²⁰⁵ See Josephus, *J.W.*, 6.432 and especially 7.114-115: “Yet was there no small quantity of the riches that had been in that city still found among its ruins, a great deal of which the Romans dug up; but the greatest part was discovered by those who were captives, and so they carried it away,—I mean the gold and the silver, and the rest of that most precious furniture which the Jews had, and which the owners had treasured up underground, against the uncertain fortunes of war.”

²⁰⁶ See Madeline Boucher, *Parables*, 139-140, “According to rabbinic law, burying is the best safeguard against theft . . . and one who buries entrusted money is free from liability; but anyone who wraps entrusted money in cloth is obliged to restore any loss incurred through such incaution.” In *Hear then a Parable*, 226-227, Scott quotes a Rabbi Samuel, “Money can only be guarded [by placing it] in the earth.” See also, Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom*, 216, and Young, *Parables*, 92.

²⁰⁷ McGaughey, “The Fear of Yahweh,” 242.

²⁰⁸ Mark L. Bailey, “The Parables of the Hidden Treasure and of the Pearl Merchant,” *BSac* 156 (1999), 176-177, notes, “People would bury their treasures to keep them safe from marauders. This was a common practice when people went on a journey or were at war. Josephus referred to the incredible wealth that Jews had buried underground and that the Romans discovered. The tenuous political conditions that prevailed at the time of Christ prompted people to bury their treasures for security.”

the Fathers (m. 'Abot 1:1), advised building a 'hedge' or 'fence' around the Torah as a way of preserving the Jewish patrimony. The portrait of the third servant—the one who seeks to preserve his talent by burying it—may have been Matthew's symbol for his early rabbinic rivals: They bury away the treasures of Judaism by their protective attitude toward their religious heritage.²⁰⁹

Harrington's thesis, which is shared by several others,²¹⁰ is that the third servant's burying of the talent represents Matthew's criticism of his Jewish opponents whom he accuses of failing to make *Torah* and Israel's faith heritage available more broadly out of a misplaced desire to protect and conserve it. Harrington's thesis would provide an attractive explanation for the perplexing punishment of the third servant for what would have otherwise been a prudent decision. Furthermore, this thesis would fit well into the theme of conflict between the Matthean community and its Jewish detractors we discussed in our analysis of the context of the parable.²¹¹

Although there are a number of rabbinical and apocryphal texts which illustrate Israel's task of preservation of *Torah* and its heritage,²¹² one oft-cited text is a portion of the Tannaitic midrash, 'Abot R. Nat. In this episode, Rabbi Eleazar ben Arach uses a parable to comfort Johanan ben Zachai after the death of his son:²¹³

R. Eleazar entered and sat down before him. He said to him, 'I will tell you a parable: To what may the matter be compared? To a man with whom the king deposited an object of value. Every single day the man would weep and cry out,

²⁰⁹ Harrington, "Polemical Parables," 297. See also Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 354.

²¹⁰ Especially Scott, *Hear then a Parable*, 226-234. See also McGaughy, "The Fear of Yahweh," 242; Dodd, *Parables*, 152; and Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew XIX-XXVIII*, 404.

²¹¹ Hans Conzelmann, *An Outline of the Theology*, 145, notes, "His [Matthew's] community is involved in an actual controversy with Judaism—evidently in connection with the Jewish war and the Jewish restoration movement which began after it, in which the Pharisaic rabbinate came to the fore. The acuteness of the controversy can be seen in Matthew's basic idea, which involves the saving history: the church is the true Israel. The empirical Israel has misunderstood its commission to be a light to the nations and therefore lost its election."

²¹² For a list of sources, see Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew XIX-XXVIII*, 404; and Jeremias, *Parables*, 61.

²¹³ Scott, *Hear then a Parable*, 230.

saying,: ‘Woe unto me! When will I be free [of the responsibility] of this trust in peace?’ You too, master, you had a son? He studied the Torah, the Prophets, the Holy Writings, he studied Mishnah, Halachot, Agadot, and departed from this world without sin. And you should be comforted when you have returned your trust unimpaired.’²¹⁴

Like the third servant who, after receiving his talent from the master, buries it for safekeeping, Rabbi ben Zakai received a trust in the form of a son who he remitted to YHWH “unimpaired” at the moment of his untimely death. This rabbinic parable, which originates from “an early period,” illustrates the concept of Israel’s duty to conserve its heritage by envisioning it as a treasure which must be preserved inviolate at all costs.²¹⁵ While there is no direct connection between this rabbinic parable and Matthew’s Talents, the similarities between the two parables do suggest that perhaps there is something more to the image of the buried talent than just a moralism about good management. Matthew’s view of *Torah* focuses on practical application (7:24-27), sharing/teaching (13:42; 28:20), and witness to the nations (7:14-16),²¹⁶ rather than on conservation per se.²¹⁷ Furthermore, given the upheaval in the half-century between the Jewish War and the Bar-Kokhba revolt, it would stand to reason that *conservation* very well could have been important to late-first century Judaism. Given the Matthean community’s apologetic intentions, Matthew likely circumscribed his own outlook on *Torah* over and against the *perceived outlook* of his Jewish opponents (e.g., Matt 23).²¹⁸ Thus, Matthew’s audience, living in a context where many Jewish groups were competing for ascendancy in the post-Second-Temple

²¹⁴ Translation by Young, *Parables*, 35.

²¹⁵ Young, *Parables*, 35.

²¹⁶ Donald Hagner, *The New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 203-205.

²¹⁷ Conzelmann, *An Outline of Theology*, 145-146. We are not suggesting that practical application, sharing/teaching, and witness were not important to first century Judaism or Matthew’s opponents. However, based on texts like ch. 23, Matthew was clearly critiquing the outlook and practice of his opponents’ *Torah*-keeping.

²¹⁸ Carter explains the phenomenon this way, “In the context of conflict and persecution, Matthew’s community struggles to make sense of the pain and hostility of its rejection. It seeks to secure distance between itself and the synagogue and to articulate its own place as a beleaguered but special group in God’s scheme of things.” Warren Carter, *Matthew: Storyteller, Interpreter, Evangelist* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1996), 83-84.

milieu, would have recognized in the third servant the ideology of their opponents toward *Torah* and received a warning against succumbing to it.²¹⁹

The thesis that the third servant's burying of the talent represents a critique of Matthew's opponents has been itself criticized. One persuasive criticism is simply that of all the accusations that Matthew could lodge against his opponents, he cannot fairly accuse them of being lazy (19:26: ὀκνηρός) in their handling of *Torah* and Israel's faith traditions.²²⁰ As we saw in the rabbinic parable above, study and reflection on *Torah* was much more than an occasional pastime; it was a way of life. Thus, the object of Matthew's critique must be an element in his own Christian community and not presumed Jewish opponents.²²¹

Unfortunately, this criticism neglects the broader Matthean view of how *Torah* (i.e., teaching) should be employed. Bearing fruit (7:16-19), hearing and doing (7:24-27), bringing forth treasure (13:52), and instructing the nations to obey (28:20) are examples of faithful use of teaching (*Torah*) that go beyond reflection and study in the Matthean perspective. For Matthew, study and reflection on *Torah*, which formed such an important part of Jewish life were, in and of themselves, insufficient. Moreover, Matthew castigates his opponents because "they do not practice what they preach" (23:3). Thus, it certainly would not be out of character for Matthew to

²¹⁹ McGaughey, "The Fear of Yahweh," 243, echoes this conclusion, "Those who, like servant C, believed that '... if he returns the deposit intact he has at least done his duty ...' would reject the parable's harsh conclusion out of hand and turn away in rage, their understanding of the mission of Judaism having been frontally assaulted. The few, on the other hand, who 'heard' the parable — i.e., accepted the conclusion of the parable on its own terms — would realize that what they took to be their mission had evaporated in the face of this new vision of reality which they had received by means of the parable."

²²⁰ Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 531, writes, "If Jewish leaders had been in view, this could have been a parable about only one servant or one group of unfaithful servants. Also, the Jewish leaders and scribes cannot be accused on 'burying' their deposit or of being lazy. They were continually and assiduously engaged with teaching the Law and extending its influence, as Matt 23:15 attests."

²²¹ Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 536.

accuse Jewish opponents of laziness in their stewardship of Israel's heritage by means of the image of the third servant who buried his talent.²²²

It is likely that the third servant's burying of his talent and the master's harsh reaction are not incidental narrative details, but rather allude to a criticism of Matthew's Jewish opponents. Before we relate the buried talent to the negative pole of Gentile inclusion, we must analyze one final problem of interpretation that is closely related to the buried talent.

D. The Horrible Punishment of the Third Servant

If the fact that the third servant is punished at all for safely concealing his talent in the earth raises eyebrows, then the *nature* of the third servant's punishment is bound to raise outright objections. In fact, in the parable of the Talents, the third servant receives *two* punishments.²²³ The first punishment, the removal of the talent and its bestowal on the first servant, comes from Q and is also present in Luke. It also is the occasion for the logion in Matt 25:29//Luke 19:26 which was the conclusion of the original parable.²²⁴ Unlike Luke, for whom this first punishment was sufficient, Matthew has added a second punishment, the ejecting of the third servant into the outer darkness, "where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth" (25:30). The fact that "stewardship in the teachings of Jesus is very serious business" cannot account for the harshness of the third servant's punishment.²²⁵ What possible reason could Matthew have for assigning this hapless third servant to the very darkness of Gehenna, the place of eternal punishment?²²⁶

²²² Harrington, "Polemical Parables," 297.

²²³ Guillaume Migbisiegbe, "Entering into the Joy of the Master or Being Cast Out into the Outer Darkness; Re-imagining the Eschatological Judgment in Matthew 25.30," in *The Gospel of Matthew at the Crossroads of Early Christianity* (ed. Donald Senior; Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters, 2011), 66.

²²⁴ Hultgren, *Parables*, 277.

²²⁵ Blomberg, *Parables*, 93.

²²⁶ Migbisiegbe, "Entering into the Joy," 613, argues convincingly that the punishment in Matthew 8:12; 22:13; 24:51; and 25:30 is banishment into Gehenna.

In fact, the third servant's banishment into eternal punishment has raised questions from the earliest times. The *Gos. Naz.*, originating in the first half of the second-century, provides evidence for this reality.²²⁷ While only fragments of this ancient gospel exist today, Eusebius writes in *Theoph.* about a version of the parable of the Talents/Minas contained therein:

But since the Gospel [written] in Hebrew characters which has come into our hands enters the threat not against the man who had hid [the talent], but against him who had lived dissolutely—for he [the master] had three servants: one who squandered his master's substance with harlots and flute-girls, one who multiplied the gain, and one who hid the talent; and accordingly one was accepted (with joy), another merely rebuked, but the other cast into prison—I wonder whether in Matthew the threat which is uttered after the word against the man who did nothing may refer not to him, but by epanalepsis to the first who had feasted and drunk with the drunken.²²⁸

The disharmony between the servants' punishments/rewards in Matthew and the *Gos. Naz.* fragment is very interesting for our argument. A close reading of the above fragment of the *Gos. Naz.* reveals an inverted order of servants' rewards/punishments (i.e., A, B, C, C¹, B¹, A¹) such that the last servant receives the first reward/punishment.

Figure 5: Servants and Rewards/Punishments in Matthew and the <i>Gos. Naz.</i> ²²⁹		
Servant 1	Matthew: Doubles the five talents <i>Gos. Naz.:</i> Spent the talent on harlots and flute girls	Praised and enters Master's happiness Thrown in prison
Servant 2	Matthew: Doubles the two talents <i>Gos. Naz.:</i> Multiplies the trade	Praised and enters Master's happiness Rebuked
Servant 3	Matthew: Buries the talent <i>Gos. Naz.:</i> Hides the talent	Talent taken and servant ejected Accepted with joy

Figure five shows the *Nazarenes'* punishments/rewards contrast Matthew's version of the Talents parable. The master rewarded the servant who hid the talent and rebukes the one who multiplied the talent through investment.²³⁰

²²⁷ Schneemelcher, ed., *New Testament Apocrypha*, 1:159-160.

²²⁸ Quoted in Schneemelcher, ed., *New Testament Apocrypha*, 1:161-162.

²²⁹ We have adapted this table from Luomanen, *Recovering Jewish Christian Sects*, 130. Luomanen refutes the hypothesis that three different Jewish-Christian Gospels existed in antiquity (i.e., the *Gos. Eb.*, *Gos. Heb.*, and *Gos. Naz.*). He argues that the *Gos. Heb.* and the *Gos. Naz.* are really one and the same. See Luomanen, *Recovering Jewish Christian Sects*, 120. In the below quotations of Luomanen's work, the reader must be aware that what other scholars typically call the *Gos. Naz.* is called the *Gos. Heb.* by Luomanen.

This contrast between Matthew and the *Gos. Naz.* is significant given the fact that the latter shows evidence of dependence on the former.²³¹ Apparently the redactor of the *Gos. Naz.* modified the Matthean version to fit more conventional views of morality where the burial of the talent should be rewarded instead of punished as we argued above. In contrast, the *Gos. Naz.* reserves real punishment only for the servant who squanders the talent in dissipation.²³² The version of the parable of the Talents/Minas in the *Gos. Naz.* underscores the difficulty presented by the unduly harsh treatment of Matthew's third servant.

Perhaps the way to best understand Matthew's conception of the harsh punishment of the third servant in 25:30 is to reflect on it from the broader perspective of entire Gospel. By now we should not be surprised at the images of judgment in 25:30 because they also appear in 8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; and 24:51. Guillaume Migbisiegbe compellingly argues that Matthew intended three of these references, 8:12, 22:13, 25:30, to be read together because they contain the metaphors of "outer darkness" and "weeping and gnashing of teeth."²³³

²³⁰ The punishment of the *Nazarenes'* second servant makes sense in view of the prohibition in Deuteronomy 23:19-20 against the charging of interest. Petri Luomanen, *Recovering Jewish Christian Sects and Gospels*, 131, writes, "The version that we have in the *Gospel of the Hebrews* seems to be in accordance with these values [i.e., conventional Jewish values]. It accepts with joy the servant who simply kept the allotted money in a safe place. The servant who multiplied the money is rebuked and the servant who spent the money of his master with harlots and flute players is cast into prison. Thus, the parable that was recorded in the *Gospel of the Hebrews* would make perfect sense in the context of ancient Mediterranean culture."

²³¹ Petri Luomanen, *Recovering Jewish Christian Sects and Gospels*, 131-132, gives a number of reasons why the *Gospel of the Nazarenes* is dependent on Matt and Luke. The two most compelling are (1) cultural considerations around the hiding of the talent; and a (2) clear dependency on Matt and Luke for several phrases (esp. the phrase 'harlots and flute-girls' in Luke 15:30-31). Based on our reconstruction the Q-parable above, we noted that Q used a smaller denomination of money (i.e., mina) instead of Matthew's "talent." Since the *Gos. Naz.* contains "talent," we can safely assume Matthean influence. Secondly, the phrase, "eat and drink with drunkards" shows the influence of Matt 24:49. Finally, Schneemelcher, ed., *New Testament Apocrypha*, 1:159, suggests that the *Gos. Naz.* was written well after the penning of Matthew's Gospel, "The *terminus a quo* is accordingly the writing of Mt., and the *terminus ad quem* is Hegesippus (180), who is the first to testify to the existence of GN. It will have appeared in the first half of the second century." Thus, the author/editor of the *Gos. Naz.* would likely have had Matt (and Luke) available.

²³² William Stoker, *Extracanonical Sayings of Jesus* (Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1989), 45, sees an allusion in this fragment to Matt 24:49 as well.

²³³ Migbisiegbe, "Entering into the Joy," 613.

The common elements in these three sayings are not difficult to discern. The conclusion of the “East/West” saying in 8:12 refers to the judgment of “Sons of the Kingdom” at the Eschatological Feast. The conclusion of the Wedding Feast parable in 22:13 refers to the judgment of an inappropriately clothed guest at the Eschatological Feast. The conclusion of the Talents parable in 25:30 refers to the judgment of the third servant who could not enter the Eschatological Feast, or “his master’s happiness,” because he buried his talent.²³⁴ The common elements in all three are the Eschatological Banquet at the *Parousia* and judgment on those in Israel who have rejected Jesus and his message. Two of the three attestations of these words of judgment have connections to Gentile inclusion (8:12 and 22:13) and the delay of the *Parousia* (22:13 and 25:30). Based on this evidence, we can conclude that the offense of the third servant, the burying of talent, is much more serious than merely a failure to manage his master’s property wisely as is claimed by many commentators on Matthew’s parable.²³⁵

The third servant’s buried talent and the horrible punishment resulting from it refer to Matthew’s dispute with competing Jewish movements as Harrington and others have suggested.²³⁶ Unlike Matthew’s community, represented by the first two servants, these competing movements within Israel have effectively made their “inheritance of faith” irrelevant by concealing it from a broader audience and rejecting Jesus’ message.²³⁷ At the end of the interim period (i.e., the long journey or the delay of the *Parousia*), the master, who represents

²³⁴ Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew VIII-XVIII*, 402, observe, “The rewards he has given to the good slaves stand for heavenly rewards given to the faithful at the great assize, and their joy is that of the messianic banquet.”

²³⁵ See Blomberg, *Parables*, 214.

²³⁶ Harrington, “Polemical Parables,” 297.

²³⁷ Scott, *Hear then a Parable*, 233, agrees, “In the narrative a hearer is allowed a glimpse of the price for protecting and preserving Torah. In the narrative that price is loss of a future. The cases of the first two servants show what the future is. But the yoke was to be borne in order to have a future.”

Jesus Christ, will call all of Israel to account and will exclude many from the joy of the Eschatological Banquet. This is the negative pole of the theme of Gentile inclusion.

Nevertheless, there is a positive message implicit in the horrible judgment on the third servant in Matthew. Matthew's community was likely predominantly Jewish with a significant Gentile minority.²³⁸ Moreover, five references to "their synagogues" (Matt 4:23; 9:35; 10:17; 12:9, and 13:54) indicate that other Jewish groups had excluded Matthew's community from the broader Jewish community of faith.²³⁹ Thus, Matthew was forced to perform the unenviable task of defining his community over against other late first century Jewish groups.²⁴⁰

On the other hand, Matthew also had to address the positive task of showing what his community *was*. For this task, he utilized the term ἐκκλησία, which was parallel to the OT לְעֵדָה, the "assembly" or "congregation" of Israel.²⁴¹ Although Matthew does not clearly define the ἐκκλησία, at minimum he considered it to be the eschatological assembly of the true remnant of Israel.²⁴² Because of the fear of being charged with an Anti-Semitic interpretation of Matthew as excluding the entire Jewish race, many modern commentators reject even this minimalistic definition. In this case, some prefer to see Matthew's ἐκκλησία as a "community of salvation within Israel" though this definition is "insufficient" because Matthew separates himself from his

²³⁸ Konradt, *Israel*, 367.

²³⁹ Carter, *Matthew*, 81-88.

²⁴⁰ Viljoen, "Matthew, the Church and Anti-Semitism," 669, writes, "Thus the 'Jesus-movement' was caught up in this rivalry amongs [*sic*] Jewish religious groups. The Jewish Christians defined themselves distinct from the other current Judaistic movements. Luz aptly argues that the conflict between Matthew and the current Judaism should not be defined merely as mother-daughter conflict, but rather as a rival[ry] between siblings."

²⁴¹ See K. L. Schmidt, *TDNT* 3:518-536; Benjamin Merkle, "The Meaning of Ἐκκλησία in Matthew 16:18 and 18:17," *BSac* 167 (2010), 281-282, 285; and Steve Walton, "Calling the Church Names: Learning about Christian Identity from Acts," *PRSt* 41 (2014), 229-234.

²⁴² Viljoen, "Matthew, the Church and Anti-Semitism," 672-673. Sim, "The Gospel of Matthew," 27-28, argues that there were in fact very few Gentiles within the Matthean ἐκκλησία. Based on the expression in 8:17 ("treat him as you would a pagan [ὁ ἔθνικός]"), Sim argues that only full Gentile proselytes would have been admitted into the Matthean ἐκκλησία.

Jewish opponents much more than this definition allows for.²⁴³ Setting aside these anxieties, we note that in Matthew this eschatological assembly has the unique character of admitting Gentiles as full participants in the community.²⁴⁴ In this way, Matthew reconstitutes Israel as the faithful remnant made up not only of those who are part of Israel by birth, but also those who by birth were excluded (the Gentiles) but now may enter into the assembly on account of their reception of Jesus' message. The negative task of excluding the intransigent in Israel as represented by the parable's third servant who buried his talent naturally leads to the positive task of including those who receive Jesus' message as illustrated by the first two servants who multiply their trusts. For Matthew, ethnicity is no longer a prerequisite for inclusion in Israel.²⁴⁵ Like Jews, Gentiles may be included in the ἐκκλησία of Israel based on their reception of Jesus' message, the Gospel of the early Christian community.

VI. Excursus: Two Other Early Christian Interpretations of the Parable of the Talents/Minas.

Interestingly, two Alexandrian church fathers provide a similar interpretation of the parable of the Talents/Minas to what we have developed above. In his *Comm. Matt.*, which survives only in fragments,²⁴⁶ Origen of Alexandria (A.D. 185-254) discusses the parable of the Unmerciful Servant (Matt 18:21-35).²⁴⁷ Origen's reflection on this parable leads him to discuss the somewhat similar Matthean parable of the Talents (details of which he conflates with the Minas parable). With regard to the parable of the Talents/Minas, Origen writes,

²⁴³ Konradt, *Israel*, 350. Konradt himself falls prey to an "insufficient" definition by claiming on page 336, "It [the ἐκκλησία] is the part of Israel that, to use the words of the parable of the sower, has accepted the word of the kingdom (13.19) and bears fruit accordingly."

²⁴⁴ Konradt, *Israel*, 350.

²⁴⁵ F. P. Viljoen, "Matthew, the Church and Anti-Semitism," 676.

²⁴⁶ Phillip Schaaf, ed., *ANF* 9:791.

²⁴⁷ The portion of Origen's *Comm. Matt.* that addressed the parable of the Talents has been lost.

Who, then, in regard to this parable [the Talents/Minas], will not say that the nobleman, who goes into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return, is Christ, going, as it were, into another country to receive the kingdoms of this world, and the things in it? And those who have received the ten talents are those who have been entrusted with the dispensation of the Word which has been committed unto them. And His citizens who did not wish Him to reign over them when He was a citizen in the world in respect of His incarnation, are perhaps Israel who disbelieved Him, and perhaps also the Gentiles who disbelieved Him. (*Comm. Matt.* 14.12)

In his brief discussion of the Talents/Minas parable Origen has visited several points of our argument. He views the parable of the Talents/Minas as a christological allegory in which the master/king's (i.e., Christ's) absence represents an interim period (of delay) and his return represents the *Parousia*. Furthermore, Origen has noted the connection between the Lukan king's rebellious citizens and those among Israel who have rejected the Christian message.

Similarly, Cyril (A.D. 370-444), Bishop of Alexandria, also addresses the parable of the Minas in his *Comm. Luke, Homily* 128-129, two centuries after Origen. Cyril's treatment of the parable is heavily influenced by his perspective on the disputes regarding the two natures of Christ, especially his controversy with Nestorius in the first half of the fifth century.²⁴⁸ Therefore, Cyril's interest is overwhelmingly in the parable's christological components. For Cyril, the king's journey represents the Ascension. He writes,

When he had endured the passion on the cross for our sakes and had abolished death by the resurrection of his body from the dead, he ascended to the Father and became like a man journeying to a far country [Luke 19:12: εἰς χώραν μακράν]. Heaven is a different country from earth, and he ascended so that he might receive a kingdom for himself. (*Comm. Luke, Homily* 128)

Later, in *Homily* 129, Cyril exhorts his listeners to use the interim period of the King's absence as an opportunity for the preaching of the Gospel.

²⁴⁸ Jerald C. Brauer, ed., *The Westminster Dictionary of Church History* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), 254-255.

In addition to perceiving the parable of the Talents/Minas as an allegory of the Ascension and *Parousia* of Christ, Cyril also grasped the connection to the negative pole of Gentile inclusion in which the basis for belonging to the people of God is not birth but rather the manner of receiving the Gospel. In *Homily* 128 Cyril argues that the citizens' rejection of the crown-prince as king (Luke 19:14, 27) is connected with Luke's Entry narrative where Jesus will be denounced by the Pharisees. This refusal, according to Cyril, represents the rejection of the Christian message by Israel.²⁴⁹ Despite Cyril's overwhelming christological interest, in his writing we see some of the basic elements of the interpretation of the parable of the Talents/Minas we have described above.

VII. Delay of the Parousia, the Possibility of Gentile Inclusion and the Message of the Parable of the Talents/Minas.

The motif of the absent master in the parable of the Talents/Minas is an effective literary device through which Luke and Matthew could unpack the themes of the delay of the *Parousia* and the possibility of Gentile inclusion in the early Christian community. In the motif of the absent master the departure of the crown-prince/householder allegorically represents the events of Good Friday/Easter and the Ascension (Matt 25:14//Luke 19:12).²⁵⁰ The long journey (Matt 25:19: μετὰ πολλὸν χρόνον) to a far country (Luke 19:12: εἰς χώραν μακράν) represents the delay of the *Parousia*.²⁵¹ The master/king's return allegorically represents the *Parousia* itself, expressed in terms of an accounting (Matt 25:19-30//Luke 19:15-26) and subsequent entrance

²⁴⁹ Cyril's evaluation of the Jews is colored by his many heated disputes and violent confrontations with the Jews of Alexandria including their expulsion from the city and the pillaging of their property. According to Socrates, *Ecclesiastical History*, 7.13, one of Cyril's early acts as Bishop of Alexandria was to expel the entire city's Jewish population against the will of the Orestes, the prefect appointed by the imperial government at Constantinople. Norman Russel, *Cyril of Alexandria* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 7.

²⁵⁰ Jeremias, *Parables*, 63; McGaughy, "The Fear of Yahweh," 237-238; Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 537-538, 540; Hultgren, *Parables*, 285, 288.

²⁵¹ Scott, *Hear Then a Parable*, 226.

into the Eschatological Banquet (Matt 25:21, 23).²⁵² Finally, the servants who receive the master/king's trust represent the Christian community and its opponents. The social expectation that upon their return such absent masters would evaluate the work of their slaves provided an opportunity for the Gospel writers to emphasize that the manner of the reception of the Jesus' message would be the basis for eschatological judgment instead of identity or ethnicity. The allegorical parable proved to be the perfect literary vehicle for making these points by means of the absent master motif.²⁵³

The delay of the *Parousia* is obvious in both Luke and Matthew and well documented by the majority of commentators and scholars.²⁵⁴ Matthew's context of three *Parousia* parables (24:45-25:30), Luke's editorial reference to eschatological expectations in 19:11, and the mention of a "long absence" in Matt 25:19 and "far country" in Luke 19:12, are all decisive in this regard.

However, Gentile inclusion is not as immediately apparent in the parable of the Talents/Minas since the two versions of the parable are overwhelmingly focused on the negative aspect of exclusion.²⁵⁵ For this reason, we have argued that the parable of the Talents/Minas represents the *possibility* of Gentile inclusion by means of the reconstitution of Israel based on the criterion of the reception of Jesus' message instead of ethnic identity. In contrast, there are commentators who argue the minimalistic position that the parable of the Talents/Minas has

²⁵² Scott, *Hear Then a Parable*, 41-42.

²⁵³ Jeremias, *Parables*, 61, 63.

²⁵⁴ Boucher, *Parables*, 143.

²⁵⁵ Davies and Allison. *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew VIII-XVIII*, 401-402.

nothing to do with the identity of God's people,²⁵⁶ but is simply about stewardship and management in the eschaton.²⁵⁷

Without denying the importance of good stewardship in the message of the parable, from the perspective of Matthew and Luke, this proposition cannot account for the harrowing punishment the master/king inflicts on Matthew's third servant and Luke's opposing delegation. To account for this punishment, we probed the meaning and significance of the throne-claimant in Luke and the third servant's buried talent and his subsequent ejection into the outer darkness in Matthew. In our analysis we discovered that these images were indeed associated with a conflict between the early Christian community and elements in first century Judaism who had rejected the Christian message. For both Matthew and Luke, the resolution of the conflict is the reconstitution of the people of God based on the reception of the message of Jesus instead of ethnic identity. In this way, the *possibility* of Gentile inclusion is implicitly present in the eschatological allegory of Talents/Minas.

VIII. Conclusion.

In the preceding chapters we have studied three literary motifs as they come to expression in the Synoptic parables and the *Gos. Thom.* In Chapter Five, we argued that the delay of the *Parousia* and Gentile inclusion are connected through the motif of growth as it comes to expression in the parables of the Weeds and the Wheat and the Mustard Seed. In chapter six, we claimed that the delay and Gentile inclusion are joined through the motif of the wedding feast as it is developed in the parable of the Wedding Feast/Great Banquet. Finally, in this chapter we demonstrated that the delay and the possibility of Gentile inclusion are merged through the

²⁵⁶ Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 531.

²⁵⁷ Young, *Parables*, 97.

theme of absent master as it manifests itself in the parable of the Talents/Minas. Our analysis of the connections between Gentile inclusion and the delay of the *Parousia* finds support in the Gospel sayings and in texts from the NT Epistles that we explored in Chapter One. The fusion of the themes of Gentile inclusion and the *Parousia*'s delay is obviously a significant development in the theology of the early Christian authors who shaped the literature we have studied. The concluding chapter of this study will comment on the theological significance of the fusion of these themes for the early Christian movement in its first century context.

CHAPTER EIGHT

A CONCLUDING REFLECTION ON THE DELAY OF THE *PAROUSIA*, GENTILE INCLUSION, AND YHWH'S ΜΑΚΡΟΘΥΜΙΑ IN 2 PET 3

I. Summary of the Argument of This Study

In the course of our study we have seen in the literature of the early Christian community that time and time again there is a significant correlation between the delay of the *Parousia* and the inclusion of Gentiles into the early Christian community. In Chapter One, we noted a number of compelling examples of the fusion of these themes in Mark 13:10//Matt 24:14; Matt 28:16-20; Luke 24:45-49; and Acts 1:6-8. In Chapters Five through Seven, we argued that the literary motif of *growth* in the parables of the Weeds¹ and the Mustard Seed (Chapter Five),² the motif of the *eschatological banquet* in the Wedding Feast/Great Banquet (Chapter Six),³ and the motif of the *absent master* in the Talents/Minas (Chapter Seven)⁴ are examples of the coupling of the *Parousia's* delay and Gentile inclusion.

Of course, other theological and sociological trends were at work in the extraordinary phenomenon of the early Jewish-Christian movement's inclusion of Gentiles in ever increasing numbers. We identified and explained two such undercurrents.⁵ First, in Chapter Two we analyzed the ambivalence toward Gentiles among many of the extant expressions of Judaism in the first century as a possible explanation for Gentile inclusion. In this chapter we noted that the "positive pole" of this ambivalence was strong enough to allow for an increasingly open attitude to Gentile participation in the early Christian community during the first century. Second, in

¹ Matt 13:24-30, 36-43//Gos. Thom. 57

² Mark 4:30-34//Luke 13:18-19//Matt 13:31-32//Gos. Thom. 20

³ Matt 22:1-14//Luke 14:15-23//Gos. Thom. 64

⁴ Matt 25:14-30//Luke 19:11-27

⁵ In Chapter Four we briefly suggested several other possible explanations for Gentile inclusion such as (1) a growing hostility to some Jewish movements on the part of early Christianity as it became more and more a Gentile religion and (2) the evolving conception of *Torah* in the early Jewish-Christian movement which made it possible for Gentiles to fully participate without adhering to parts of *Torah* which would have been extremely burdensome or impossible such as circumcision and dietary laws. The analysis of these explanations are outside the purview of this study.

Chapter Three we studied the rejection of the early Christian community and its message by many first century Jewish movements. The early Christian writings we have analyzed embrace those in Israel willing to receive the message of Jesus and his first successors. However, the early Christian community's experience of rejection by many of the dominant forms of first century

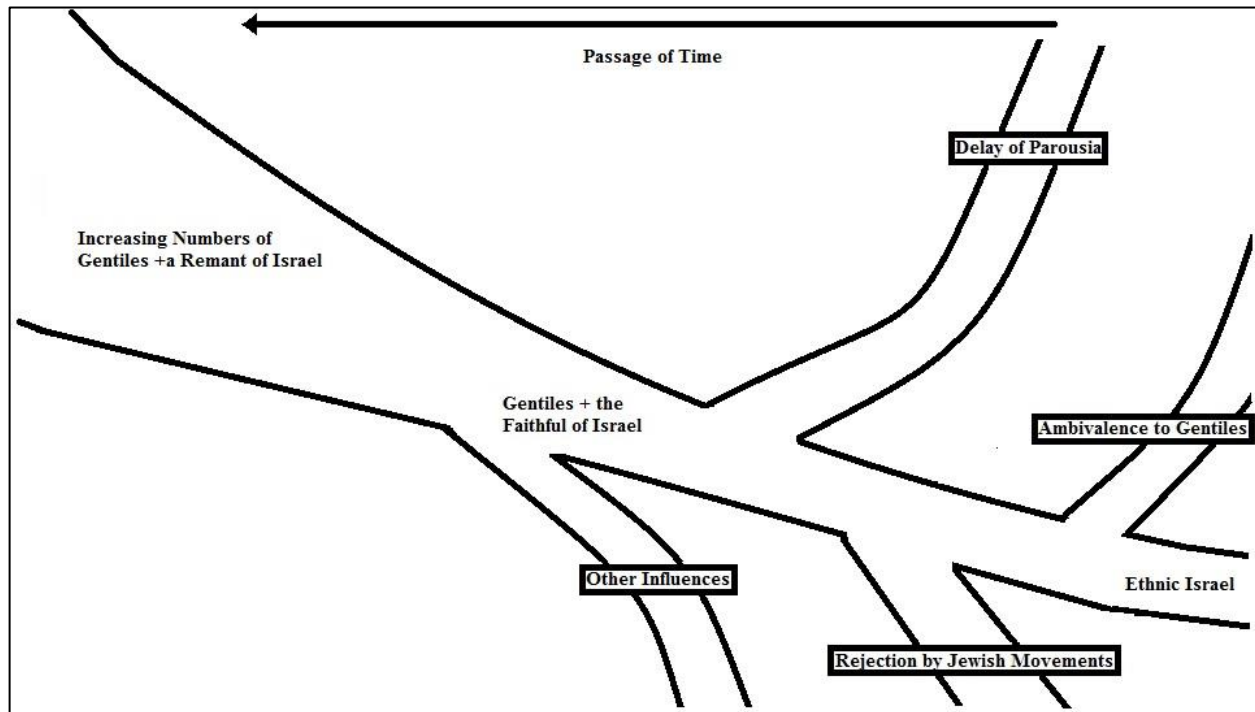


Figure One: The People of God Conceptualized as a Stream. At the earliest stages of the Christian community, the people of God are composed of ethnic Israel. With the passage of time, other inputs, such as the *Parousia*'s delay, the experience of Jewish rejection, ambivalence to Gentiles, and other influences, gradually broadened the composition of God's people to include Gentiles.

Judaism was a significant factor in its openness to Gentiles. On the account of these trends addressed in Chapters Two and Three, early Jewish-Christians recognized that because of (1) the ambivalent presentation of Gentiles in their own faith traditions and (2) their cool reception from many of their co-religionists, Gentile inclusion was deemed permissible and, eventually, laudable.

Although many influences worked together to broaden the operative definition of God's people to include Gentiles as shown above in Figure One, the delay of the *Parousia* played a key

role. The early Christian community was aware of the possibility of the *Parousia*'s delay since its primitive traditions claimed the timing of the end to be unknowable.⁶ Nevertheless, the delay discouraged many in the decades following Easter because of the influence of certain dominical sayings suggesting that the *Parousia* would occur in the lives of the first Apostles (e.g., Mark 13:30//Matt 24:34//Luke 21:32 and Mark 9:1//Matt 16:28//Luke 9:27; cf. 2 Pet 3:8-9 and John 21:22-23). By the latter half of the first century, they had passed away. Evidence for this discouragement is easy to find in the parables of the Virgins (Matt 25:1-13), the Wise and Foolish Servant (Matt 24:45-51//Luke 12:41-48), and the Persistent Widow (Luke 18:1-8). Paul also addresses the early Christian movement's discouragement with the delay of the *Parousia* in 1 Thess 4:13-5:11.

In light of these frustrations, the question faced by the early Christian movement was the significance of this unhopd-for interim period. The assertion that Jesus and his successors had erred in their evaluation of the *Parousia*'s timing was for the most part rejected, though it seems that at least some adopted this view.⁷ In contrast, the early Christian traditions gave two separate but complementary answers to the question of the significance of the delay. First, the delay of the *Parousia* was a period of moral preparation for the unexpected moment of Christ's return embodied by the *Watchfulness parenesis*.⁸ The second answer is that the delay represents God's

⁶ Unexpectedness is one of the most common descriptions of the *Parousia*'s timing. See Mark 13:32//Matt 24:42//Luke 12:40; Matt 24:44//Luke 12:39-40; Matt 24:37-41//Luke 17:26-28; Mark 13:34-37//Luke 12:35-39; 1 Thess 5:2-4; Rev 3:3; and 16:15.

⁷ A good example is *1 Clem* 23:2-3 (cf. 2 Pet 3:3-4): "Therefore let us not be double-minded, neither let our soul indulge in idle humors respecting His exceeding and glorious gifts. Let this scripture be far from us where He said, 'Wretched are the double-minded, which doubt in their soul and say, these things we did hear in the days of our fathers also, and behold we have grown old, and none of these things hath befallen us [trans. Lightfoot].'" Other early patristic figures such as Polycarp and Irenaus address these very same issues in their correspondence. See Charles Talbert, "II Peter and the Delay of the Parousia," *VC* 20 (1966): 137-145.

⁸ Schnackenburg, *The Moral Teaching*, 195, writes, "There springs an eschatological attitude which does not push aside the final events that are to come to the fringe of the believer's mind, but on the contrary views them, in prospect and as approaching, as perpetual summons to vigilance and sobriety, to responsible action in the world,

gracious decision to allow time for the Gospel to be preached and the Gentiles to be included before the *Parousia* of Christ and the ensuing Great Assize. In effect, the delay of the *Parousia* had *moral* and *missiological* significance.

With regard to the moral significance of the delayed *Parousia*, the early Christian community's message of preparation reinforced confidence that the *Parousia* would indeed occur, but at an unknown moment that could perhaps be earlier or later than expected.⁹ Thus, the non-occurrence of the *Parousia*, though unwelcome, became a motivation to faithfulness during eschatological trials and temptations that would inevitably precede the *Parousia* according to Christian apocalyptic thought (e.g., 1 Pet 4:12-19; Mark 13:5-23//Matt 24:4-25//Luke 21:8-24; etc.).¹⁰

With regard to the *missiological* significance, the early Christian community eventually came to see the delay as a divinely-ordained period set aside for the inclusion of people formerly not considered objects of God's mercy, such as Gentiles. Though at first *centripetal* in nature (i.e., the Gentiles themselves had to seek inclusion in the Jewish-Christian community), this motivation would eventually take the character of the classic *centrifugal* statement of mission

to combat and struggle against the destructive powers of evil and to a living hope and joyful confidence." For texts using the motif of watchfulness/wakefulness, see (1) the parable/simile of the Thief (Matt 24:42-44//Luke 12:39-40; 1 Thess 5:2, 4; 2 Pet 3:10; Rev 3:3; and 16:15); (2) the parable of the Doorkeeper (Mark 13:34-37//Luke 12:35-38); (3) the parable of the Ten Virgins (Matt 25:1-13); (4) the parable of the Wise and Foolish Servant (Matt 24:45-51//Luke 12:41-48); and (5) Rom 13:11-14.

⁹ These two extremes appear in the *Parousia* parables of Matt 24:45-25:13. In the first of these parables, the parable of the Wise and Foolish Servant (24:45-51), the foolish servant gets drunk and mistreats his fellow servants, reasoning that his master is delayed. When the master arrives earlier than expected, he punishes and casts out the foolish servant into eschatological judgment. The converse occurs in the Virgins parable (25:1-13). Expecting the possibility of the bridegroom's late arrival, the wise virgins have come with extra oil. The foolish virgins, however, made no such plan and consumed their oil during the long vigil in which both sets of virgins slept. The wise virgins enter into the banquet hall with the bridegroom while the foolish were shut out of the feast in the outer darkness while they searched for oil.

¹⁰ Lövestam, *Spiritual Wakefulness*, 58.

found in Matt 28:16-20.¹¹ In this way the disappointment experienced by the early Christian movement was channeled into the positive task of integrating Gentiles into its faith communities, which was a phenomenon not entirely unknown in first century Jewish circles as we noted in Chapter Two. Martin Goodman presents the missional significance of the delay from the sociological perspective:

As the end was continually postponed, they [the early Christians] reacted to the failure of reality to live up to expectations by seeking new adherents to their group: the fact that the newcomers wished to join them confirmed them in their beliefs despite the objective fact that what they thought would happen had not come to pass. Missionary outreach was thus an antidote to doubt and uncertainty. Success in winning converts brought reassurance.¹²

While Goodman's analysis is helpful from the sociological perspective, we can make the same statement from a theological standpoint. Oscar Cullmann explains, "*This missionary proclamation of the Church, its preaching of the gospel, gives to the period between Christ's resurrection and Parousia its meaning for redemptive history* [italics his]."¹³ By employing this reasoning, the early Christian community could withstand events like the passing of the first generation of Apostles who some thought would not die before the *Parousia*.¹⁴ In fact, the early Christian community came to understand such events not as a failure of prophecy but rather as evidence of God's compassion. In his mercy, God had made a space of time available to include formerly excluded people in the covenant community of Israel before the *Parousia* and its accompanying judgment on all nations (e.g., Matt 25:31-46).

¹¹ In Chapter Two we noted that centripetal "mission" was the basic orientation of most of the OT texts referring to the Gentiles' participation in the cult of YHWH. See Vogels, *God's Universal Covenant*, 118-122.

¹² Goodman, *Mission and Conversion*, 166-167.

¹³ Cullmann, *Christ in Time*, 157.

¹⁴ See Mark 9:1//Matt 16:28//Luke 9:27 and Mark 13:30//Matt. 24:34//Luke 21:32 (cf. John 21:22-23 and 2 Pet 3:4).

II. An Illustration of the Significance of the *Parousia*'s Delay as an Opportunity for Gentile Inclusion: 2 Pet 3

As we conclude our study, it would be profitable to return to 2 Pet 3, a text we only briefly mentioned in Chapter One, as an illustration of the significance of the *Parousia*'s delay for Gentile inclusion in the early Christian communities. This text maintains that the delay of the *Parousia* is God's patient provision of time for those outside the covenant community to enter in. We will argue that 2 Pet envisions this covenant community made up of both Jews and Gentiles.

Second Peter is a pseudonymous epistle with many of the characteristics of a last testament of a notable religious figure (see 1:12-15).¹⁵ The author uses the posthumous voice of the Apostle Peter to warn his readers apologetically against current heresies troubling the community.¹⁶ While nothing is entirely certain, it is likely that 2 Peter was written by a leader in the Roman church sometime in the late first century or early second-century A.D.¹⁷ One of the primary heresies addressed by the author of 2 Peter is the rejection of the *Parousia* by those whom the author calls ἐμπαῖκται or "scoffers" in 3:3.¹⁸ According to 2 Peter, the ἐμπαῖκται deny the *Parousia* because it did not happen during the lives of the *fathers*, the first generation of apostles who received the promise of Christ's *Parousia*.¹⁹ The argument of the scoffers, along

¹⁵ Richard Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter* (WBC; vol. 50; Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983), 131.

¹⁶ Jerome H. Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude* (AB; vol. 37c; New York: Doubleday, 1993), 122.

¹⁷ Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 158-159, 161. Moreover, 2 Peter makes generous use of sources, especially the Epistle of Jude and an unknown Jewish apocalypse which likely treated the delay of YHWH's judgment on Israel's oppressors. See Daniel von Allmen, "L'Apocalyptique Juive et le Retard de la Parousie en II Pierre 3:1-13," *RTP* 99 (1966): 255-274. Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, 135, writes, "In short, we should consider the author to be a collector of materials (Jude, Pauline letters, 1 Peter, gospel materials) and a preserver of common traditions. He is unusual among NT authors in that he expressly mentions other materials."

¹⁸ The author of 2 Pet borrows the term ἐμπαῖκται and indeed the entire verse in 3:3 from his source, Jude 18. There seems to have been a correlation between the libertinism of 2 Peter's opponents (2:13-16) and their rejection of the *Parousia* in that the latter was a pretext for the former. To combat this false teaching, the author reaffirms the reliability of the *Parousia* despite its delay and connects it with the usual moral parenesis in light of the unknown moment of the final eschatological crisis (3:11-12, 14).

¹⁹ Kraftchick, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 152, claims, "Christian writers often used the phrase 'our fathers' (NRSV: 'our ancestors') to designate seminal figures from Israel's history (e.g., John 6:31, Rom 9:5, Heb 1:1, *Barn.* 5:7), but in

with texts like John 21:22-23, suggest that in fact sayings ascribed to Jesus like Mark 13:30//Matt 24:34//Luke 21:32 (the “Generation” saying) and Mark 9:1//Matt 16:28//Luke 9:27 were understood by some in the early Christian community to refer to a *Parousia* before the death of Jesus’ first disciples.

The author of 2 Peter offers two responses to the arguments of the ἐμπαῖκται.²⁰ Only the second is germane to our reflection. The author of 2 Peter states in 3:9: “The Lord is not slow [βραδύνει] in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness [βραδύτητα]. He is patient [μακροθυμεῖ] with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance [ἀλλὰ πάντας εἰς μετάνοιαν χωρῆσαι].” This claim is rooted in the OT concept of YHWH’s patience or μακροθυμία as compassion.²¹ God’s gracious patience, or his μακροθυμία, is not slowness or indecisiveness, but rather a divine provision for human repentance.²²

the present context, the expression refers more generally to the first generation of believers. By the time 2 Pet was written, these believers had likely died. Since Jesus had promised to return during that generation’s lifetime, their death called into question the validity of his promises. The opposition therefore argued that the second coming of Christ would not occur, since the predicted time for the event had already passed.”

²⁰ In the first response to the ἐμπαῖκται, 2 Pet alludes to Ps 90:4 (LXX 89:4) in 3:8: “For a thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by.” The point of this reference has nothing to do with Dispensational Millennialism or even a philosophical declaration about God’s timelessness. It simply means “that human reckoning of time does not apply to God . . . mortals cannot understand divine chronometry.” See Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, 238.

²¹ According to Horst, *TDNT* 4.376, *Torah* portrays God as “slow to anger” (אֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם and אֶרֶךְ אַפַּיִם) which the LXX translates as μακροθυμέω, μακρόθυμος, and μακροθυμία. In Exod 34:6-7 YHWH declares, “The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious god, slow to anger [LXX: μακρόθυμος], abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the fathers to the third and the fourth generation.” YHWH’s μακροθυμία proves scandalous in Jonah 4:2 (“I knew you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger”) when Jonah realized that it extended even to the pagan Gentile oppressors of Israel for the purpose of encouraging them to repent, which the people of Nineveh eventually did. 2 Peter captures well the OT understanding of YHWH’s μακροθυμία in 3:9: “He is patient [μακροθυμέω], not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”

²² Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, 242. Bauckham notes that the concept of God’s patience leading to repentance was common in apocryphal literature, “We should note that the association of repentance with the coming and the deferment of the End was also traditional. The time up to the eschatological judgment was the time for repentance; with the coming of the End opportunity for repentance would cease and forbearance give place to justice and wrath (2 Apocalypse of Baruch 89:12; 4 Ezra 7:33-34, 82; 9:11; Acts 17:30-31; 2 Clem 8:2-3; 16:1).” Bauckham, *Jude*, 2 *Peter*, 312.

Second Peter's concept of the Lord's μακροθυμία as an opportunity for repentance would have little bearing on the theme of Gentile inclusion if it were not for 3:14-16 where the term appears for the second time in chapter three. In 3:15-16, 2 Peter contends,

Bear in mind that our Lord's patience [μακροθυμία] means salvation [σωτηρί], just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.

This assertion must be extremely important to 2 Peter's argument as the author defends it by claiming that the Apostle Paul also wrote it with God-given σοφία ("wisdom"). In order to discover the meaning of the important assertion "God's patience means salvation" for the theme of Gentile inclusion, we must inquire into its Pauline connections.²³ Where in Paul's corpus does he argue, "God's patience means salvation"?²⁴

²³ There is some dispute whether to attribute to Paul the declaration of vs. 15a ("God's patience means salvation") specifically or vv. 14-15 in their entirety. According to Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 330, some commentators claim that καθὼς (v. 15b: "just as") attributes to Paul both the parenesis of v. 14 and the assertion of 15a. When taken together, vv. 14-15 could refer to Paul's eschatological paranesis in general, found in many of his letters. See, for example, Rom 13:11-14; 1 Cor 1:7-9; 7:25-40; 1 Thess 4:13-5:11; 2 Thess 1:5-12; and Phil 4:5-7. However, there is good evidence that 2 Peter only connects the assertion of v. 15a ("God's patience means salvation") with Paul's writings. First, 2 Peter has already mentioned God's patience as a reason for the delay of the *Parousia* (v. 9), meaning that it is pivotal in the argument and therefore must be supported by an appeal to outside authority. In contrast, eschatological paranesis (v. 14) was common in early Christian literature and needed no special legitimization. Second, καθὼς immediately follows the assertion of 15a ("God's patience means salvation just as [καθὼς] our dear brother Paul also wrote."). Thus, the assertion of 15a is the most natural and logical connection to Paul's writing. Third, the parenesis of v. 14 shows a clear affinity for the preceding verses based on the triple repetition of προσδοκάω in vv. 12, 13, and 14. Therefore, v. 14 is not the introduction of a new thought, but the conclusion of the preceding encouragement to await the eschatological crisis by means of godly living. Fourth, the appearance of the comparative particle ὥς ("as") in v. 16 does not jeopardize our argument about καθὼς in v. 15b because ὥς cannot mean that *all* of Paul's writings assert that "God's patience means salvation." The concept, "God's patience means salvation," is merely one of many Pauline eschatological foci. Rather ὥς in v. 16 equates the divine wisdom that inspired Paul to assert v. 15a with the same divine wisdom that inspires *all of his letters*. Arndt, *et al.*, "ὥς," *BAGD*, 897, supports this understanding of the comparative particle ὥς which commonly functions as an adverb comparing the manner of a preceding action. In effect, the manner in which Paul writes in v. 15b, i.e., under divine inspiration, is the same manner (ὥς) in which he writes all of his letters in v. 16.

²⁴ Apparently, a number of Pauline writings had been collected and circulated by the end of the first century. Likely these included 1-2 Thess, Rom, and 1-2 Cor, since these were known to 2 Clem, another early Roman author. The phrase "wrote you" in v. 15 is of no assistance since it was very likely that Paul's letters were circulating widely among many of the early Christian communities by the end of the first century and had become the faith heritage of far more than just their original recipients. Cranfield writes, "For by the time that this Epistle

The assertion of 15a, “Our Lord’s patience means salvation,” is not an exact quotation of a known Pauline epistle. It is a summary statement of 2 Peter’s own view on the purpose of the *Parousia*’s delay which, according to the author, agrees with Paul’s divinely-inspired thinking on the same subject. However, 2 Peter is not merely making superficial and imprecise references to Paul. The rebuke against those “ignorant and unstable people” who distort Paul’s teachings in 3:16 shows that the Pauline corpus is extremely important to both the author and to the Petrine faith community of which 2 Peter’s opponents are a part.²⁵ This suggests that the assertion of 3:15 does have (a) specific reference(s) to Paul’s teachings in view. Two Pauline texts stand out as the most likely objects of 2 Peter’s reference to Paul: Rom 2:4 and 9:22.²⁶

Romans 2:4 contains two terms important to the discussion of the *Parousia*’s delay in 2 Pet 3: μακροθυμία (cf. 2 Pet 3:15) and μετάνοια (cf. 2 Pet 3:9). The presence of these terms in Rom 2:4 suggests a correlation with 2 Pet 3:15a. Romans 2:4 is part of a diatribe, begun in 2:1, in which Paul is arguing against an imagined Jewish interlocutor.²⁷ At issue is a hypothetical

was being written Paul’s Epistles were regarded (as the next verse [v. 16] makes clear) as the possession of the whole universal Church.” C. E. B. Cranfield, *I & II Peter and Jude* (London: SCM Press, 1960), 192. For the same reason, the phrase in 3:1, “My second letter to you,” does not indicate that the recipients of 1 Pet were the same as those of 2 Pet. Likely 1 Pet was already in circulation, at least locally, at the time of the writing of 2 Pet. Furthermore, “My second letter to you,” is not meant as a factual assertion. Rather it is meant to solidify the Petrine authority of the pseudonymous author/testator.

²⁵ 2 Peter’s concern for the proper understanding of Paul’s writings manifests itself in his accusation that some ἀμαθής (“unlearned”) and ἀστήρικτος (“unstable”) persons misinterpret (στρεβλῶ) such writings because they are difficult to understand. Given the repetition of ἀμαθής in 2:14, perhaps some of these same “unstable” persons have been seduced by 2 Peter’s opponents.

²⁶ The best method to determine the Pauline letter to which 2 Peter refers is to search the Pauline corpus for the elements of the assertion in 15a, καὶ τὴν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν μακροθυμίαν σωτηρίαν (“the Lord’s patience is salvation”). Since σωτηρία is a common term, our search must rather focus on μακροθυμία and its cognates. After removing all attestations where μακροθυμία is associated with human behavior (see 2 Cor 2:6; Gal 5:22; Eph 4:2; Col 1:11; 3:12; 1 Tim 1:16; 2 Tim 3:10; and 4:2), we are left with just two possibilities: Rom 2:4 and 9:22. Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, 250, claims that 2 Pet 3:15 refers to Rom 2:4. Cranfield, *I & II Peter and Jude*, 192, sees a reference in 2 Pet 3:15 to Rom 2:4, 3:25, and 9:22. Baukham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, sees Rom 2:4, 3:25, 9:22-23, and 11:22-23 as more remote possibilities since he believes that 2 Peter’s appeal to Paul includes the parenthesis of 3:14 as well. Horst, *TDNT*, 4.386, suggests a connection to Rom 9:22.

²⁷ James Dunn, *Romans 1-8* (WBC; vol. 38a; Dallas: Word Books, 1988), 81.

dispute about God's judgment of the Jew and Gentile. Paul accuses his interlocutor of stubbornness (2:5: σκληρότης), refusing to admit that he is indeed as worthy of God's judgment as the pagan Gentiles.²⁸ So Paul continues in v. 4, "Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience [μακροθυμία], not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance [μετάνοια]?" Paul's imaginary interlocutor has failed to personally appropriate the lesson taught in *Torah* (Exod 34:6) that God's kindness, tolerance, and patience (μακροθυμία) in punishing evil-doers is an opportunity for repentance (μετάνοια).²⁹ Where God's tolerance and patience should have led the Jewish interlocutor to repentance, his stubbornness and unrepentant heart "stores up" God's wrath for the day of wrath (ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ὀργῆς) and apocalyptic judgment (ἀποκαλύψεως δικαιοκρισίας τοῦ θεοῦ) according to 2:5.

The connection between Rom 2:4 and the assertion in 2 Pet 3:15a is fairly clear-cut. Paul has rejected his imaginary interlocutor's belief that the people of Israel are somehow immune from judgment because of their covenant status. Instead, Jews and Gentiles, both of whom are liable on the Day of Judgement (Rom 2:5), can benefit from the μακροθυμία of God if they recognize it as an opportunity to repent. In fact, the only difference between the operation of divine judgment and salvation for Jews and Gentiles is in salvation-historical *order* (Rom 2:9-10). As heirs of the

²⁸ See Rom 2:1, "For at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things." Joseph Fitzmyer notes, "Paul reacts and insists that such a person is no better than the pagan, for in spite of a superior moral culture, which may enable the interlocutor to agree with Paul's indictment of the pagan . . . he [the interlocutor] does the same things, evil in all its forms." Joseph Fitzmyer, *Romans* (AB; vol. 33; New York: Doubleday, 1993), 296.

²⁹ Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 83, writes, "The interlocutor of typical Jewish piety knows well about the importance of repentance within the divine-human relationship, but is unaware, does not understand, that he stands in the same need of repentance as the Gentiles."

promises (cf. Rom 9:1), the Jews are first in line for both God’s salvation *and* for his judgment since God shows no favoritism (Rom 2:11).³⁰

A second example of God’s μακροθυμία appears in Rom 9:22. Like Rom 2:4, 9:22 and its context have much in common with 2 Pet 3. In addition to the reference to God’s μακροθυμία, there is also the suggestion of the eschatological destruction (ἀπόλεια) of evil-doers in Rom 9:22³¹ which appears in 2 Pet 3:6-7, 10-12, and Rom 2:5. Especially significant is parallelism between 2 Pet 2:9 and Rom 9:22 shown below in Figure Two.

Figure Two: A Comparison of Rom 9:22d and 2 Pet 3:9c	
Rom 9:22d	ἤνεγκεν ἐν πολλῇ μακροθυμία σκεύη ὀργῆς κατηρτισμένα εἰς ἀπόλειαν
2 Pet 3:9c	ἀλλὰ μακροθυμεῖ εἰς ὑμᾶς, μὴ βουλόμενός τινας ἀπολέσθαι

Romans 9:22 is part of a section of text in which Paul discusses the fairness of his position on election by responding to objections in 9:14 (“What then are we to say? Is there injustice on God’s part?”) and 9:19 (“You will say to me then, ‘Why then does he still find fault?’”).³² Paul’s answer (9:21) is that by his sovereign authority, God has created one vessel (σκεῦος) for honorable uses and another for dishonorable uses just as a potter fabricates clay pots for different functions. Paul then explains what the vessels represent and the significance of God’s patience

³⁰ Dunn writes, “The underlying thrust of 2:1-11 now becomes explicit: the target is Jewish presumption of priority of privilege, which however soundly rooted in God’s election of Israel—a fact which Paul does not dispute (1:16) and to which he will return (3:1-4; chaps. 9-11)—has led Paul’s kinsfolk to the effective conclusion that God’s judgment of Israel will be on different terms from his judgment of the nations as a whole.” Dunn, *Romans* 1-8, 88.

³¹ C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans* (ICC; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1979), 495-497.

³² Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 566-570.

(μακροθυμία) with them. Using the protasis of an incomplete condition,³³ Paul poses the question in vv. 22-23: “What if God, wanting to demonstrate his wrath and make known his power, bore with great patience [μακροθυμία] the vessels [σκεύη] of his wrath, prepared for destruction [ἀπώλειαν], in order³⁴ to make known the riches of his glory upon vessels [σκεύη] of his mercy prepared beforehand for glory [my translation].”³⁵ The majority of commentators understand the plural σκεύη as “vessels” or “recipients” of God’s wrath and mercy in both of the genitive phrases of 9:22 (σκεύη ὀργῆς and σκεύη ἐλέους).³⁶ In 9:22-23, Paul has upended the traditional imagery for Israel’s election by equating the recalcitrant elements of Israel with the “vessels of wrath” and the reconstituted people of God, made up of Gentiles and a faithful Jewish remnant, with the “vessels of mercy.”³⁷ Paul confirms the identity of the “vessels of mercy” in v. 24 by equating them with “us” whom God called from both the Jews (ἐξ Ἰουδαίων) and the Gentiles (ἐξ ἐθνῶν) according to OT prophecy.

³³ Paul Ellingworth, “Translation and Exegesis: A Case Study (Rom. 9,22 ff.),” *Bib* 59.3 (1978), 399, writes, “The difficulty for the translator arises, not merely from the absence of an expressed apodosis, nor from the fact that Paul does not finish his sentence (cf. Rom 5,12f.), but from the conjunction of these and other problems.”

³⁴ Most English translations struggle to translate the καὶ at the beginning of 9:23. In fact, several manuscripts omit καὶ to improve the language. In addition, there are reasons to exclude it as well. Paul Ellingworth, “Translation and Exegesis,” 401, writes, “The omission of καὶ would indicate a somewhat stronger anticipation of the thought of ch. 11. Here, as implicitly in 2,4, the wrath of God would be not merely contrasted with his glory: his patience with the σκεύη ὀργῆς would be directly related, as means to end (ἵνα), to the revelation of his glory ἐπὶ σκεύη ἐλέους.” Despite this assertion, the textual evidence supports inclusion.

³⁵ See Dunn, *Romans 9-16* (WBC; vol. 38b; Dallas: Word Books, 1988), 558, for a discussion of some of the grammatical issues connected with this verse.

³⁶ A. T. Hanson, “Vessels of Wrath or Instruments of Wrath? Romans IX.22-3,” *JTS* 32 (1981), 433-434.

³⁷ Hanson, “Vessels of Wrath,” 439-443, argues that the real meaning of σκεύη is “instruments” and not “vessels.” He makes this argument from the LXX (Jer 27:25 [=50:25] and Isa 13:5) where the term is used in the sense of “weapon.” Regardless of whether the meaning is “vessel” or “instrument,” the basic image is a reversal of Israel’s self-identity. Furthermore, it is possible for the vessel to be at once the “instrument” and also the “receptacle” of divine wrath as Pharaoh of Egypt demonstrates (Rom 9:17). On the account of his hardened heart (i.e., as an instrument), YHWH’s wrath fell upon Egypt and upon his own firstborn (i.e., as a receptacle--Exodus 11:4-5). See also Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 569-570.

In Rom 9:22-23, God's μακροθυμία is salvation, just as the assertion of 2 Pet 3:15a claims. Obviously, given the fact that the "vessels of mercy" are both Jews and Gentiles, God's salvific μακροθυμία is responsible for more than just the salvation of members of ethnic Israel; it also is salvation for the Gentiles. The early Christian community considered this μακροθυμία to be an essential attribute of God's character (Exodus 36:4). By means of the assertion of 2 Pet 3:15a, the author's audience could find meaning in the troubling reality of the on-going delay of the *Parousia* despite the mocking slogans of its detractors, "Where is this 'coming' he promised?" (2 Pet 3:4). The delay was not a failure of the promise or a case of divine dawdling (2 Pet 3:9); it was God's μακροθυμία allowing for repentance and the inclusion of the Gentiles into God's covenant people. God was "bearing with" sinful humanity so as to save as many as possible before the fiery ordeal of the *Parousia* (2 Pet 3:7, 10-12).

III. Concluding Observations on the Delay of the *Parousia* and Gentile Inclusion in the Parables and other Early Christian Literature

Based on the texts that we have analyzed and the historical information we have assembled in this study, we have to conclude that the connection between the delay of the *Parousia* and the inclusion of Gentiles was an early development that became concretized in the later Christian writings of the NT period. In the early writings of the Apostle Paul, especially Rom 2 and 9-11,³⁸ the link between the continued tarrying of the eschatological consummation occasioned by God's μακροθυμία and the increasing interest of the Gentiles in the message of the Christian community comes to the fore. In our discussion of the Mustard Seed parable in Chapter Five, we noted that the connecting of Gentile inclusion with the literary motif of a long period of growth (=the delay of the *Parousia*) can be traced to both Q and Mark, two early Gospel sources.³⁹ In

³⁸ See above and pp. 144-153.

³⁹ See Chapter five, p. 232.

Chapter One, we reflected on the enigmatic remark in Mark 13:10 (“And the Gospel must first be preached to the nations”), which is evidence of the early Christian movement’s use of Gentile inclusion as an explanation for the *Parousia*’s delay.⁴⁰

As the decades wore on and the first generations of Jesus’ disciples passed away, it became necessary to reinforce the theme of Gentile inclusion as an explanation for the *Parousia*’s delay. Though the earliest traditions and sources characterized the *Parousia*’s arrival as unexpected (e.g., the *Watchfulness parenesis*), the experience of the passage of a long period of time was disconcerting for the early Christian community.⁴¹ During the final decades of the first century Luke and Matthew discovered two significant parables in Q, the Wedding Feast/Great Banquet and the Talents/Minas. They adapted and enlarged them to further illustrate the connection between the delay of the *Parousia* and Gentile inclusion which appeared in other earlier sources such as the Pauline Epistles and the Gospel of Mark. These adapted parables spoke powerfully to the early Christian movement’s struggle to account for the rejection experienced from other Jewish movements and the surprising interest shown by more and more Gentiles. In addition, Matthew and Luke employed commissioning texts like Matt 28:16-20, Luke 24:45-49, and Acts 1:6-8 to encourage early Christian communities to actively pursue Gentile inclusion (i.e., *centrifugal* mission) during the prolonged interim before the *Parousia*.⁴²

Finally at the close of the NT era, the examples cited in 2 Peter and 1 Clement show the mature stage of the concept of Gentile inclusion as an explanation for the delay of the *Parousia*. The founders of the early Christian communities who were not expected to pass away before the *Parousia* had been in their graves many decades. Voices within the developing Christian

⁴⁰ See Chapter One, pp. 42-45.

⁴¹ See the discussion on the Watchfulness parenesis in Chapter One, pp. 28-36.

⁴² See Chapter One, pp. 47-57.

communities themselves began to express doubt that Christ would return at all. In response, authors like those of *1 Clement* and 2 Peter argued that God was not dawdling and that *Parousia* expectation must be maintained. The prolonging epoch after Easter was no misjudgment, it was God's gracious provision for the repentance of all who would respond to the Gospel, both Jew and Gentile. These arguments and others like them become a basis for other patristic writers to defend *Parousia* expectation in the following centuries.⁴³

The preceding discussion (chs. 5-7) of the parables of the Weeds and Wheat, Mustard Seed, Wedding Feast/Great Banquet, and Talents/Minas has shown that three motifs were employed in the early Christian literature to illustrate the connection between the delay of the *Parousia* and Gentile inclusion. In Chapter Five we argued that motif of a long period of growth before the harvest (i.e., the parable of the Weeds and the Wheat) or the maturation of a mustard plant suggests a prolonged age before the *Parousia*. We observed that the references to the fields of the "world" (the parable of the Weeds and Wheat) and the flocking of the birds to the shade of the mustard plant (the Mustard Seed parable) are indicative of Gentile inclusion. In Chapter Six, we observed that the literary motif of the postponed eschatological banquet suggests a reference to the *Parousia's* delay. Furthermore, the multiple invitations to the banquet after the rejection of the initial invitees allude to Gentile inclusion in contrast to the rejection of many in first century Judaism. Finally, in Chapter Seven, we perceived that the motif of the absentee landlord whose return is prolonged refers to the *Parousia's* delay. The punishment of the first servant who buried (Matthew) or hid (Luke) his trust implies the exclusion of the recalcitrant in Israel and, by default, opens the door of the Kingdom to a reconstituted people made up of faithful Jews and Gentile seekers. In this way the motifs of growth, eschatological banquet, and absent master

⁴³ Talbert, "II Peter and the Delay," 137-145.

stand as literary evidence of a socio-theological shift happening within a significant part of the early Christian movement.

This connection made between the *Parousia's* delay and Gentile inclusion was one of the most important motivations behind the transformation of early Christianity from one of many Jewish religious groups to a *bona fide* religion in its own right consisting primarily of Gentiles.⁴⁴ Though it was not uncommon for Gentiles to associate with Jewish communities and even have a role in the synagogues,⁴⁵ the level of integration of Gentiles in the early Christian communities became so great that eventually Jews became a minority in the religion which they founded and which had as its central tenant devotion to a Jewish Messiah.

At first, the inclusion of the Gentiles took on a decidedly *centripetal* orientation, much like the account of Jesus' dealings with Gentiles in which he responded positively to Gentile inquiry but did not seek it out (e.g., Matt 8:5-13//Luke 7:1-10; Matt 15:21-28//Mark 7:24-30; cf. Acts 10). Gentiles had to take the initiative to become part of the early Christian community. Eventually, the impulse to include Gentiles in the early Christian community would take on a much more *centrifugal* character with the development of what became the Christian mission (e.g., Matt 28:16-20; Luke 24:47-48; Acts 1:6-8; 28:28; cf. Rom 15:16), the movement responsible for dispersing Christianity and its worldview to the furthest extents of the known world within several centuries after Easter. While it was not the only factor pushing the church toward Gentile inclusion and finally Gentile mission, the experience of the *Parousia's* delay was among the most influential. Before the desired and long-expected eschatological vindication, the

⁴⁴ Goodman, *Mission and Conversion*, 161-168.

⁴⁵ McKnight, *A Light among the Gentiles*, 43.

early Christian movement acknowledged, “The Gospel must first be preached to the nations”
(Mark 13:10//Matt 24:14).

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